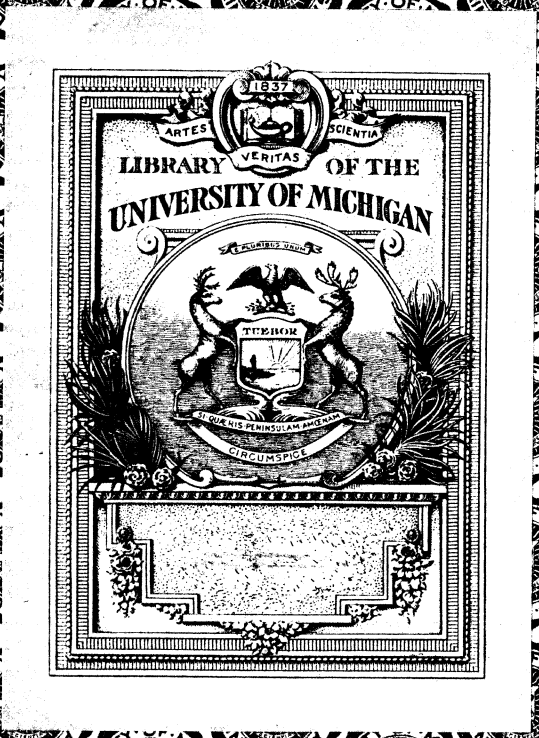
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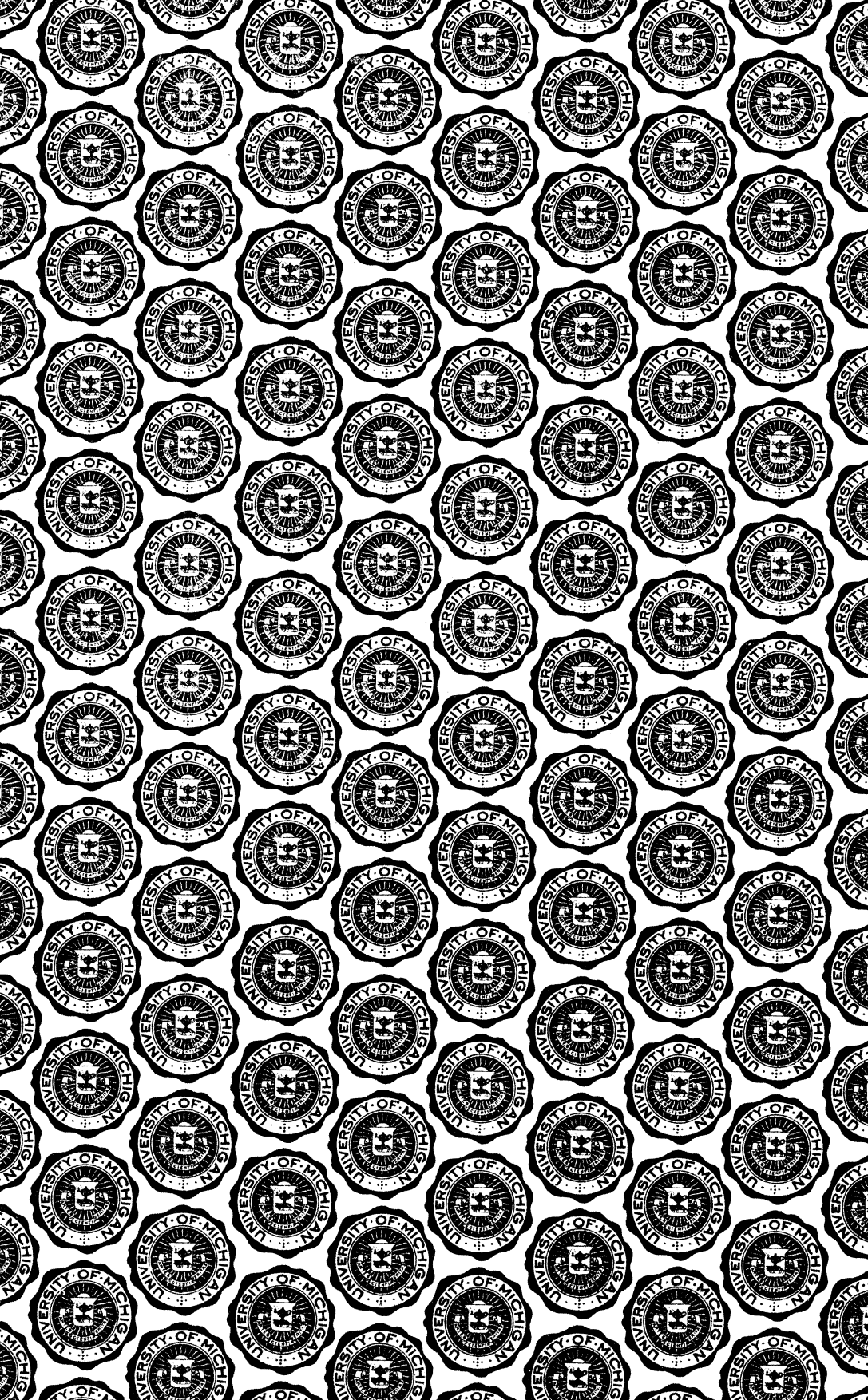


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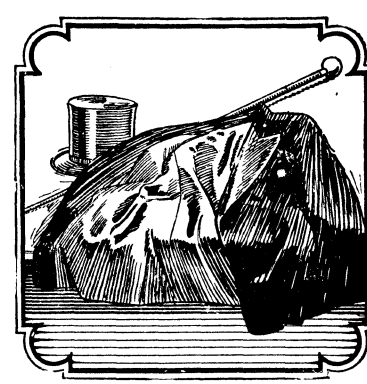
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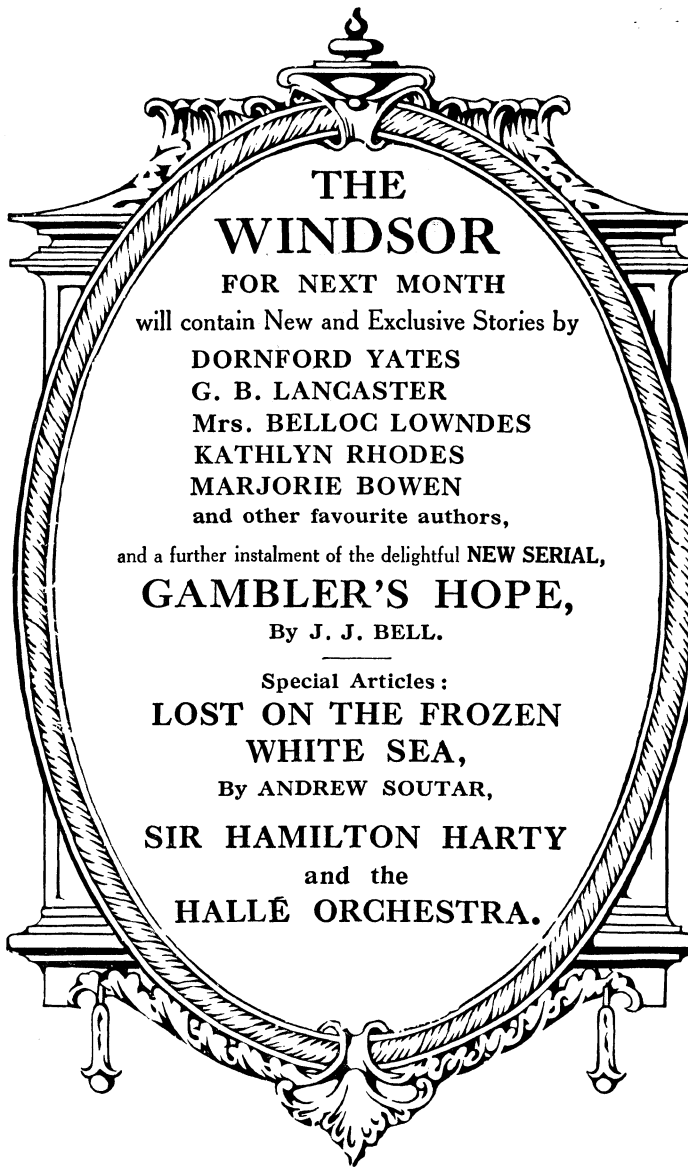
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THE DOINGS.



" Mr. Bass, sitting up in the middle of the bed, looked so rumpled that Mrs. Bass longed to put him straight."

MR. AND MRS. BASS

By MABEL BARNES GRUNDY

ILLUSTRATED BY ALBERT BAILEY

I WOULD like to be able to say that my hero was named Hiram K. — Something, that he was a multi-millionaire, that he was a great, white, powerful he-man with a film jaw, who worked his brain to the attenuated size of the silver cord that lurks in the backbones of herrings in his pursuit of the everlasting dollar, that he never opened his lips without ejaculating " Gee ! " or " Have you got me ? " and that his blind and selfless adoration for his wife was so immense that, going one better than Sir Walter Raleigh, when cloaks were not handy, he offered his own supine body in muddy places as a carpet on which she might place her dainty feet.

But one must stick to the truth, for, although American right through to the innermost red and white corpuscles of his anatomy, my hero was none of these things, nor said them, nor did them.

His name was Archibald Bass, he wasn't a multi-millionaire, in fact, judged by the American standard of a rich man, he was scarcely even comfortably off ; he didn't resemble a film he-man, for his chin was round, he was stoutish and small, his shoulders stooped and his head poked ; he had never, whatever the provocation, been heard to say " Gee ! " ; and although he had a wife of whom he was reasonably fond he

gave her the slip whenever an opportunity occurred, for he was always a little frightened that she might be nosing out what he was up to—a harmless "up to," but not in the eyes of Mrs. Bass.

The story begins at the Golf Hotel,



"'Sir,' said one patriarch of eighty-two, 'golf has made me what I am. Still going strong at four-score and more. Look at me!'"

Hyères, in the South of France. Mrs. Bass, who was English, insisted upon a winter and spring in Europe every two or three years,



"Mr. Bass did, and immediately averted his eyes. The patriarch's appearance didn't appeal to him."

beginning with somewhere in the Riviera and finishing up with London.

They had stayed at the Golf Hotel, Hyères, on two previous occasions, as Mrs. Bass adored golf and bridge and got her fill of both games at this hotel; indeed, so much that one night she wrestled in her dreams for quite

a considerable time in an endeavour to drive the Ace of Spades on to the first green and woke exhausted and irritable.

Mr. Bass played no games. He hated the very sight of balls, from football and golf to cricket and ping-pong; always had and always would. He expressed these sentiments so loudly one day in the hotel lounge that the hair of the elderly gentlemen, or of those who still had any, and played their daily round, stood on end, and they, to a man, eyed Mr. Bass with extreme disapproval.

"Sir," said one patriarch of eighty-two, "golf has made me what I am. Still going strong at fourscore and more. Look at me!"

Mr. Bass did, and immediately averted his eyes. The patriarch's appearance didn't appeal to him, nor his legs, which were Tishy-like.

"Oh, well," he said carelessly, "tastes differ. Every man to his choice. To be chasing balls into holes, or over nets, or through croquet-hoops, seems to me a waste of God Almighty's time."

"And what do you do?" inquired the patriarch testily. He had not failed to note that Mr. Bass had been unimpressed with his appearance. "What do *you* do with God Almighty's time?"

"Mr. Bass is a philatelist, a stamp collector," chipped in a woman who had joined the group. She was the type of hotel woman who always joined groups for fear she might be missing something, and the group generally didn't want her. "Mrs. Bass told me so yesterday."

"I never said it was of use," snapped Mr. Bass, and he marched away to search for his wife and request her, once and for all, not to go talking about his affairs to strangers, especially to mutton-headed golfers.

One morning Mr. Bass was feeling depressed and empty. Coffee and rolls at eight o'clock didn't last; he was sick of them, and longed for a good substantial American breakfast; he was tired of wind, which seemed to rage at Hyères five days out of six; he was tired of rustling waving palms—he disliked palms and olives, overrated trees in his opinion; he was sick of the sight of golfing women with their short skirts and mostly ugly legs, and still more sick of the voices of the golfing men and hearing them tell one another what they had done at the fifth and seventeenth holes.

Disconsolately he wandered into the empty lounge; it was half-past eleven. Everybody was out on the links, croquet or tennis lawns. He approached a large centre table on which usually reposed a week-old *Times*, *Morning Post*, a copy of the Continental *Daily Mail*, and a three or four-months'-old *Punch*.

He picked up the *Daily Mail* and sank into an arm-chair. Devoid of any hope of being amused, for he knew before he looked that it would be at the same old wheeze and stunts: the Flappers' Bill, the Starving Farmers of Great Britain (miserable old country, thought Mr. Bass), the extravagance of the Government and the general delinquencies of Mr. Baldwin. Listlessly he turned its pages. Then, suddenly, his interest was aroused, quickened, excited. In the column devoted to Paris Notes and News was a paragraph which stated that the famous stamp collection of M. Rénier, the world-famous philatelist, was to be sold by auction in Paris on March the 10th.

March the 10th! Rapidly Mr. Bass's eyes scanned the top of the paper for the date (he never knew dates). It was the 8th. That was yesterday, to-day was the 9th. To-morrow——

He sprang to his feet. Then he took out his watch. Twenty minutes to twelve.

He hurried to the hall and the concierge. He tried to keep his feet and legs from running and just succeeded, but only just, and his heart was thumping.

"No, sir." The calm and phlegmatic demeanour of the concierge as he turned the pages of a time-table drove Mr. Bass nearly mad. Could he have known, could he but have realised that this deceased M. Rénier had owned the one stamp in the world that all keen philatelists would have given their last penny and bartered their very souls to possess, he might have quickened, and his movements been less like those of a man in his sleep.

"Drat the man," said Mr. Bass to himself. "I'd like to place a squib beneath him."

"No, sir, impossible to catch this morning's express. It leaves Toulon at twelve twenty-five and it's now a quarter to twelve. But there's the five twenty-six this evening, if we could possibly get you a sleeper——"

"What time does it arrive in Paris?"

"Eight five, sir."

"That would do, if it didn't break down, or jump off the rails, or collide with something. . . . There are so many accidents on the line."

"Yes, sir."

"And if there were I should be too late; the sale is sure to be at ten," ruminated Mr.

Bass to himself, but partly speaking out loud, and he ran his fingers through his hair a little distractedly while he walked to the hall door and back again and then stared at an almanac behind the concierge's head.

The concierge waited, suppressing surprise, as well-trained concierges ought, and do. Accustomed to Mr. Bass being a quiet, well-behaved, almost dull, little gentleman, his obvious excitement now was quite intriguing.

"Yes," said Mr. Bass, still thinking aloud, "the sale would be over and that cursed Milwaukee man—I know he's in Europe—would get it, drat his eyes."

The concierge was startled. This was more than intriguing, it was thrilling.

He gave a slight cough, he had warmed towards Mr. Bass. Mr. Bass was a pleasant change to doling out stamps and picture post-cards, looking up trains and informing visitors without memories the time the next bus would start for the town. He felt he would like to help Mr. Bass.

Mr. Bass leant against the wooden rail of the conciergerie, deep in thought. Supposing he risked the night train, risked its arriving to time, there was Amanda to reckon with—Mrs. Bass. How was he to get away from Amanda? Give her the slip? He could give her the slip *now*; she was on the links and wouldn't be in till twelve-thirty; her golfing habits were fixed, but later on there would be no slipping. Each afternoon between four and half-past they had tea in their room, made by Amanda's maid, just the time, if he went by the five twenty-six, he should be starting off for Toulon. How would he escape her? Amanda was not a person easily escaped from, especially when his escape was leading to stamps. Of late, Amanda had been raising strong objections to the money he had been spending on stamps. She considered it gross extravagance, a sheer throwing away of good money. You couldn't wear a stamp, or eat it, or adorn your house or walls with it, she complained. It just lived in a drawer or cabinet and was of no use to anybody. Lately she had been saying things like that more and more; and more and more she had begun to scent when he was on the trail of a stamp. . . . She would scent it to-day. He would feel uneasy, guilty, and she would detect his guilt. He was no match for Amanda, never had been. He knew he would wear a stamp look and she would pounce on it.

The concierge watched Mr. Bass, politely waiting for him to say something, or go, or do something. Then suddenly Mr. Bass caused him to jump with surprise.

"Where is the nearest aerodrome?" he demanded.

"Er—I——" The concierge snatched at his confused senses and caught them.

"St. Raphäel, I should say, sir."

"How long will it take to get there by a quick car from here?"

"About four hours; the roads are bad."

"Order one to be ready in ten minutes." Mr. Bass bolted from the conciergerie to the lift and up to his room, flung some things in a suit-case, scribbled five words to his wife: "Gone to Paris. Writing. Archibald," tore down to the car which was awaiting him, and departed. And Mrs. Bass, returning from the links, caught a glimpse of him as the car raced round a corner of the drive, and she shouted "Archibald!" at the top of her voice, but she shouted into space. The car containing Mr. Bass vanished in a cloud of dust and an immense disturbance of fine gravel.

II.

Mr. Bass's acquaintance with aeroplanes up to now had been a distant one, a bowing one—head bowed back the wrong way, painful when one has a tendency to rheumatism and cricks in the neck.

He had never flown, and now when he flew he hated it. He was alarmed, dizzy, deafened, sick, and he clutched. All the way to Paris he clutched, with eyes closed, at anything that was clutchable.

When the crisis of sickness was imminent he shouted the information above the roar of the engine to the pilot. But the pilot was a hard young man and took no notice.

"Oh—er—ow," groaned Mr. Bass.

It was over. He felt slightly better, and with one limp hand he wiped his wet brow while with the other he went on clutching.

Then, to himself, he began to wonder, was it worth it? Reason told him that in three or four hours' time, when it was over and he was safe and had stopped being sick, it would be, but now . . . Would he survive all this? The dizziness and nausea and—pains. Yes, pains in his stomach had now attacked him, nasty pains. . . . Endeavouring to forget them, poor Mr. Bass tried to concentrate on the stamp he was thus magnificently risking his life to secure. He recalled its catalogued description when M. Rénier, the millionaire French banker, had caused a gasp of astonishment to pass through the auction-room like a tidal wave,

at his final bid of eight hundred and sixty-eight thousand francs:

"One cent. Black on magenta. British Guiana. Date, Feb., 1856. Imperfect. The stamp was originally square but this particular copy is cut in an octagonal shape. No other authentic copy of the stamp is known."

Later he had heard that this precious scrap of paper had been insured for the sum of one million three hundred and sixty-four thousand francs.

"I oughtn't," thought Mr. Bass to himself, "to give at most more than forty thousand dollars, eight thousand pounds, and I *won't*. It wouldn't be fair to Amanda after refusing to buy her that diamond pendant at Cannes—Oh—er." A wave of nausea again overtook him, a bad wave, blotting everything out from the universe but the hideous consciousness of his own sick, suffering stomach. When it was over he lay back supine, spent, hands limp, too weak even to clutch. And he wished he was dead and had passed on to a world where there were no more stamps.

III.

AND now we must return to Mrs. Bass.

She was a woman of intelligence, of decisive action, and she made up her mind with a rapidity that frequently alarmed Mr. Bass, who was by nature vacillating, save where stamps were concerned.

When she saw Mr. Bass disappear in that cloud of dust and flying gravel, she said to herself, "Archibald is after a stamp."

Straightway she entered the hotel and went to the concierge.

"Leblanc, where has Mr. Bass gone?" she demanded firmly.

"To Paris, Madame."

"There is no train till to-night."

"He's going by aeroplane from St. Raphäel, I believe."

Mrs. Bass checked her desire to jump. She always believed in maintaining a calm and dignified demeanour in the presence of servants.

"Did he by any chance refer to the nature of his business there?"

"Not directly, Madame."

"What do you mean by 'Not directly'?"

The concierge hesitated. He liked little Mr. Bass, he also liked Mrs. Bass, who was nice and civil to all her subordinates and who prompted Mr. Bass, vague and forgetful, when the weekly tips to the staff were due. But he liked Mr. Bass the better of the two. He felt now Mrs. Bass intended to pursue Mr. Bass, and from a feeling of sympathy from man to man (Leblanc himself was married) he believed that Mr. Bass wouldn't want to be pursued.

"Please speak out, Leblanc."

"He said to himself, but out loud, that he feared he wouldn't be in time if he waited till this evening's train, in case of accidents."

"Too late for what?"

"Something to do with a sale, I gathered, Madame. Something he wanted to buy. He said: 'I'm afraid I should be too late if there were an accident.'"

"Ah," said Mrs. Bass. Unobtrusively a twenty-franc note passed from her hand to the concierge's.

"Anything more, Leblanc?"

"He was carrying the *Daily Mail*." The concierge began to warm to clues; clues were apparently what Mrs. Bass was wanting, and clues she should have. "When he asked about trains and I told him he was too late for this morning's from Toulon, he quickly glanced at the *Daily Mail* and then gave a sort of cry, followed by——"

"Yes, Leblanc?"

"Well, Madame, he used very bad language, shocking language." The concierge coughed behind his hand and glanced through the open hall doors at the palms waving, and the orange trees gleaming in the strong sunshine.

Mrs. Bass's lips twitched.

"Thank you." That was all she said, and she made a bee-line for the table in the lounge and the *Daily Mail*, but it was not there. Mr. Bass in his haste and abstraction had, apparently, taken it away with him.

She went up to his room and found it on the floor. Rapidly she turned to "Paris Notes and News." No comments or exclamation escaped her lips when she discovered the fateful paragraph. She passed on to her own room, and Mr. Bass's note to her, pinned to the pin-cushion, next engaged her attention. For a full couple of minutes she stood lost in thought; not vague musing such as that to which Mr. Bass was prone, but rapid, calculating thought. Then she descended to the hall and concierge.

"Leblanc!" she said.

"Madame?"

"Will you telephone at once to Nice and secure me a sleeper, or a first-class seat on this evening's train to Paris?"

"Certainly, Madame."

"I won't wait. Let me know as soon as you hear."

"Very good, Madame."

Mrs. Bass went back to her room, instructed her maid to pack her suit-case—she intended to return to her golf and bridge when she had finished with Mr. Bass—and then went down to her lunch. She had got as far as the cheese course when a *chasseur* came in with a message: not a sleeper or a seat was to be had. She rose and went to the concierge. "Telephone for any sort of seat," she commanded, "second, third——"

Politely, for there was a firm, dominating look in Mrs. Bass's eye which always brought a sense of slight fear and guilt in those whom that eye surveyed, Leblanc informed her that that particular train carried no second- or third-class passengers. It was unfortunate——

"Is there no other train?"

"No, Madame, only an omnibus, which, as perhaps you are aware——"

"I know," she interrupted; "stops at every station in the world and arrives two days later than its scheduled time. I've been on an omnibus-train in France."

"Thank you, Madame," said Leblanc, without knowing why he was expressing gratitude, seeing he was a Frenchman and she was being rude to his country.

Mrs. Bass stood for a moment with knitted brows, and thought. People now out from luncheon, with gently urging elbows and shoulders tried to oust her from her central position in front of the conciergerie while they bought stamps and post-cards, but Mrs. Bass budged not an inch. Then, suddenly her brow cleared.

"Order a high-powered motor-car with a first-class driver to take me to Paris, and wire to Lyons, please, and command another car and chauffeur to be in readiness when we arrive to take the place of the first."

"Very good, Madame. What time?"

Mrs. Bass considered. Sixteen hours ought to be ample. If she started at four she would be in Paris in time for a rest, breakfast and brush-up before going to the sale-room.

"I should make it three o'clock, Madame, in case of accidents," said Leblanc.

"Very well," said Mrs. Bass, and she went to her room to make her preparations.

IV.

She arrived in Paris exhausted, travel-stained and late. There had been two punctures, the Lyons car had kept her waiting half an hour, and the driver, who appeared to Mrs. Bass to be a little "on," had lost his way. With the aid of a map she had found it for him, while administering a severe lecture.

She drove straight to the Hotel Florian, where she guessed Mr. Bass would have engaged a room. They had stayed there several times. Mr. Bass rarely changed his habits.

Yes, he had arrived the previous evening and had gone straight to bed. He had appeared to be ill.

"Ill!"

"Yes, Madame, nothing serious." The old concierge remembered Mrs. Bass distinctly; she had been liberal with *pourboires*. "He complained of sickness and fatigue, informed us he had flown from the Riviera and asked that he might be called early."

"And he is out now?"

"Yes, Madame."

"Do you happen to know where he went? I—I feel anxious about him."

"Well, I do, Madame. The *chasseur* was upstairs with a note and I opened the door of the taxi for Mr. Bass, and I heard him give the address, Hotel Drouot."

"Thank you," said Mrs. Bass, and a twenty-franc note passed from her hand to the concierge's. "Now, I particularly wish you to say nothing of my arrival to Mr. Bass when he returns." She offered no excuse for this request, which proved her to be an unusual woman, and the concierge said:

"Very good," without the flicker of an eyelid.

"He *may* imagine there's another woman in the case," thought Mrs. Bass, but he didn't. Had he not seen Mr. Bass the previous evening? Gentlemen after strange women, with a live wife in the offing, don't look as poor Mr. Bass had looked, green and wan, and keen on going straight to bed and—alone.

Mrs. Bass went on to the bureau.

Yes, by strange good fortune the room next to Mr. Bass's was vacant and had a communicating door. The injunction she had placed on the concierge she repeated to the reception clerk. On no account was Mr. Bass to be told of her arrival. Again she offered no excuse for this secrecy, and the reception clerk, being younger, and with less understanding than the concierge of the ways of wives and husbands, said to himself: "She's stalking him."

Mrs. Bass ascended by the lift to her room, and as soon as the porter who had brought up her suit-case had departed she examined the communicating door on her side and found that it was bolted. Then passing out

by the other door into the corridor and into Mr. Bass's room—he had not locked it or removed the key—she unbolted the communicating door on his side, leaving it bolted on hers.

"He'll never notice," she ruminated. "Archibald never notices anything. He won't notice it's unbolted."

Ten minutes later, after a hasty wash and swallowing a cup of coffee and a *brioche*, she was seated in a taxi on her way to the Hotel Drouot, in whose numerous auction-rooms the great sales of Paris were held. She was banking on the stamp-sale being at eleven o'clock; it was now a quarter to; if so—well, Mr. Bass would be a sadder and wiser man.

But the sale was over. The room was empty but for one old gentleman who sat solitary in the middle of the rows of chairs, and a man in an apron who was clearing up scraps of paper and generally tidying up. She was too late.

She approached the old gentleman and asked him in French if he had been present at the sale. He nodded, and in English inquired politely if she were interested in stamps.

"In a sense, yes."

"A fascinating subject and a most expensive hobby, too expensive for me." He smiled sadly. "Phenomenal prices have been given, just now, phenomenal."

Mrs. Bass's heart sank. She saw the workhouse ahead, or at least her fine flat in New York, servants, motor-car and jewels dissolving into stamps, and Mr. Bass and herself living in an apartment-house.

"I noticed," she said carelessly, "that the pick of the collection to-day was a British Guiana stamp."

"It was, Madame, and that stamp, the only copy in existence, brought us collectors from every part of the world."

"And who secured it?" Mrs. Bass's voice trembled in spite of the enormous effort she made to control it, but she had scarcely slept as the great car thundered through the night across France.

"An American," shouted the old gentleman, suddenly flying into a temper, "with a name of bottled beer. The Americans are collaring everything, all our priceless *objets d'art*, all our pictures, furniture, bronzes, china and stamps; and you and I, as Britishers, Madame, must feel the humiliation of it all. Here we were to-day: English, French, Italian, Dutch, Spanish and every European country represented, and a Yankee walks off with the prize. A man named Bass, a little, ugly, green-faced millionaire who bid us up to one million one hundred and sixteen thousand francs, which means, with the franc at a hundred and twenty-four, nine thousand pounds."

"And in dollars?" interrupted Mrs. Bass eagerly.

"I don't know," barked the old gentleman. "I don't think in dollars, thank God. I leave that to trash like this Bass person."

"He's not really trash," said Mrs. Bass faintly, "he's my husband; he——" But the old gentleman, without even an apology, had seized his hat and umbrella and fled.

V.

And where was Mr. Bass? Practical, business-like for once, he had hurried to the American Express Agency to inquire where the representative of Lloyd's or some other good English or American Insurance Company could be found in Paris. He would insure the stamp before returning to Hyères. This accomplished, all the time hugging his pocket-book, which contained the stamp, to his heart, he entered a jeweller's and bought a small silver box with a glass lid in which to place it (and how exquisite it looked to Mr. Bass's happy eyes as it lay on its velvet setting), and then, placing the box in the inside breast-pocket of his coat, he decided to lodge it at a bank till he and Mrs. Bass returned to America.

"Can't have it about Europe on my person till we go home—too risky," thought Mr. Bass. "But where can I find a bank? I ought to have asked the American Express. . . ." He surveyed the crowds that were jostling him on every side, and the seething mass of hooting, shooting, tearing taxis, and, of a sudden, he felt very tired and old; his stomach was still a little sick, and his head was dizzy. His French was not fluent, and how could he find strength to explain to a hurried, rushing taxi-man where he wanted to go?

"I'll return to the Florian, have a whisky-and-soda, and rest on my bed, and then go to a bank," thought Mr. Bass, whose legs were trembling beneath him. The excitement of the sale on the top of his flight had been too much for the little man. He raised a weak hand, and like an arrow from a bow a taxi darted at him. Murmuring the address, he shakily got inside, closed his eyes, clutched a strap and shot across Paris to his hotel, and the danger of the drive had been greater, he knew, than that of his flight.



"'An American,' shouted the old gentleman, suddenly flying into a temper, 'with a name of bottled beer.'"

Mrs. Bass lunched well at the Restaurant l'Aigle. She felt in need of sustenance, good nourishing food to carry her through what lay before her.

As she dallied with her coffee and liqueur she fell to wondering what cat-burglars ate and drank before embarking on a hazardous crime. Did they indulge lightly or substantially? Had she lunched wisely?

"Of course," she thought, "I may have to wait till to-night. One can never count too definitely upon what Archibald will do, but probably . . ."

Mr. Bass after arriving at the age of fifty-five had begun naps. Naps after lunch, regularly, naps after dinner, generally, naps about eleven-thirty midway between breakfast and lunch, occasionally, but naps always after lunch. That is to say, in his own home where couches were luxurious, and fires in winter—Mrs. Bass had kept up the custom of open English fires—had been comforting and soporific. In summer—they had a little summer bungalow a hundred miles from New York—he napped on a verandah. If he took a nap to-day it would be on his bed. Mrs. Bass had trained him not to nap in public; she was considerate to the feelings of others.

The very thought of Mr. Bass's naps of a sudden caused Mrs. Bass herself to feel sleepy. She had scarcely slept a wink throughout the night. As she paid the bill she was overcome by an immense feeling of lassitude in conjunction with yawns she was unable to check. The vision of her bed with its nice pink satin eiderdown hastened her feet to the door; its appeal was strong. She would creep under that luxurious covering for an hour, and she would then be ready and refreshed for Mr. Bass, strong enough for any deed. And if he had already arrived, preceded her, was already on his own bed under *his* eiderdown . . . then—things could wait.

VI.

SHE was received with the news that Mr. Bass had returned.

"You did not tell him I was here?"

"No, Madame," and the reception-clerk, who was passing and heard the concierge's reply, winked to himself. The reception clerk was not a nice young man and was given to suspicious thoughts.

Mrs. Bass entered her room on tiptoe and stood with her finger to her lips, intently listening. The walls were thin, the communicating door was hedged about with spaces, draughty places that would not have been there if it had been well constructed; but doors are like that in foreign hotels. Mrs. Bass could hear the rustling of a paper. Mr. Bass loved a newspaper; he had evidently bought a *Daily Mail* and was, obviously, not asleep.

"He soon will be," thought Mrs. Bass to herself, and she crept into her own bed. She knew, once off, he would sleep for a couple of hours or more. Had he not flown from St. Raphael, and had he not been sick and exhausted? In the past, after attacks of sickness he had invariably slept himself well. "People do," thought Mrs. Bass drowsily; "sickness makes them sleepy. . . . After my bout of sea-sickn——" She was asleep.

She was wakened at the end of an hour by noises, rhythmic noises, like the rise and swell of a tide. She sat in bed. The noises were familiar ones to her; they came, she knew, from Mr. Bass, from his nasal organ, and as they were very loud she knew that he was lying on his back. Frequently at home in the drawing-room, or library, or on verandahs, she had been compelled to turn Mr. Bass over on his side or, when very persistent, on his stomach, to hush these noises. Once she had wakened him, but never again, because Mr. Bass had flown in a passion, though usually of a quite good and even temper, and this had astonished and frightened her, because he had shouted if she ever woke him again he would hit her. Yes, Archibald had actually said that. An American husband had threatened to hit a British wife! It seemed unbelievable.

Mrs. Bass got down from the bed, crept to the door and noiselessly drew back the bolt. She had taken the precaution before sleeping to lubricate it with some almond oil she smeared on her face at night to keep wrinkles away, but which didn't, and the bolt behaved beautifully: no creaks, no cracks; it was, in fact, an astonishing door in the silence of its ways, even though badly fitting and draughty.

Mrs. Bass's head, then, like that of a tentative tortoise, slowly thrust itself through the aperture she had made, while her heart thumped. Would Mr. Bass—she could scarcely frame the words—would he suddenly open his eyes and . . .? Not a bit of it. The last trump would scarcely have aroused Archibald Bass, so tightly locked was he in the arms of Morpheus. Mrs. Bass's conjecture had been correct; he lay on his back, his mouth was open, his hair—there was not much of it—stood up in dishevelled wisps, one arm and hand lay outside the eiderdown.

This was curious, thought Mrs. Bass, for he liked warmth on his neck and shoulders, and usually snuggled deep down among the coverings, snuggled like a dormouse. What was the cause of this unusual posture? Had he felt too hot? Was he feverish?

She craned her head more forward and her body followed, moving stealthily, noiselessly, her eyes fixed on Mr. Bass's uncovered arm and hand, and step by step she approached the bed. Then an object, a small shining object which lay on the quilt beneath Mr. Bass's supine fingers, caught her attention. It was the box containing the stamp. A moment later she had seized it, and was retreating swiftly to the communicating door when she paused and glanced at the other door. Mr. Bass had bolted it. "Imagine Archibald bolting a door!" she whispered to herself. "Extraordinary!" Mrs. Bass had forgotten that the protective instinct for that which we love is one of the greatest forces in the world. Mr. Bass had felt towards his British Guiana stamp what an ordinary man, who is not a philatelist, feels towards his first-born child. He must shield it, cherish it, at any cost. "If I unbolt it, will he remember he ever bolted it? No, he won't. He'll say to himself, 'Did I or did I not?' And then he'll look at the communicating door and see that he forgot that. And he'll try to open it, and find that it's bolted on my side, and then he'll say, 'The thief came in at the other door.'"

All this Mrs. Bass said to herself like lightning. She had always been quick-thoughted, so much so, and put and answered questions with such rapidity, that poor Mr. Bass was often quite dazed when she talked to him.

On tiptoe she had moved to the door while these thoughts had raced through her mind, and soundlessly drawn back the bolt. Then back to the communicating door; but before passing through and closing it, she paused to look at Mr. Bass. His sleep was indeed profound; snores rhythmically followed one another through his nose and open mouth, such strong snores that they caused his lips to blow out with fluttering movements. He did not look pretty as he lay there, but Mrs. Bass had got accustomed to his appearance in bed; wives do, so do husbands with wives; and they make the best of things and remember only the nice bits inside each other—the kind heart, the quick sympathy, the alert mind, the creative brain, the sense of humour. This object that lies before them is only the shell, and what does a shell matter? Not much when it's getting old—an old walnut-like shell, a winter walnut one eats with port. Now if it had been a young shell that would have been another matter; but when it's over fifty . . . So Mrs. Bass wasn't a bit revolted at Mr. Bass's shell; indeed, as she looked at that outstretched arm and hand, with no warm clothes over them, looking a little cold and forlorn, for the Paris day was very chilly, she had a sudden feeling she would like to cover them up; indeed, she made a movement towards the bed to do so, but she stopped in time. Never do to waken him, or her little game would be spoilt. He must be taught a lesson. . . . Things, stamps, were going too far. Stamps would ruin them, impoverish them, bring them to an apartment-house, "where," said Mrs. Bass to herself, "there would be smells and neighbours' noises, and black-beetles." Archibald must be checked. Next it would be a Mauritius or a Sandwich Island stamp, and perhaps even, at no very distant date, a North Pole stamp.

Mrs. Bass crept back into her room and gently bolted the communicating door.

VII.

She sat for about half an hour in an arm-chair drawn close up to the widest crack, listening. The snores continued, mostly even, tide-like, occasionally gurgling as water does when it breaks upon a rock, or spluttering like fat in a bacon-pan when it first begins to frizzle. "Oh," she thought, "how he wants turning on his side."

The sounds presently acted as a soporific to her own senses; she was still a little tired. The room was pleasantly warm; it contained an electric stove which she had placed close to her chair in addition to the radiator. Her head fell back and she dozed. Then—what was that? She sprang to her feet as a wail of anguish, followed by a scream of anger and —cursing—fell upon her ears. Yes, cursing, oaths, streams of them, words, terrible, cursing, blasphemous words, words she had no idea Mr. Bass was acquainted with, expressions that might have fallen from the foul mouth of a drunken brute beating his wife—words like that. They were horrifying, and Mrs. Bass was horrified, appalling words, and Mrs. Bass was appalled. Archibald, her quiet, vague, absent-minded and mostly gentle Archibald, a husband so mild, so gently browsing among stamps or books, or poking about in museums or other dull places, had all the time been harbouring this shocking language without anyone having the

slightest suspicion that it was there, inside him, ready at any moment to leap forth like a wild beast.

Mrs. Bass crammed her fingers into her ears and fell back into her chair, trying to shut out those hideous words. "He will be better soon," she whispered to herself. "This will pass. It's the shock. The paroxysm will pass, he'll become quiet, and then I will go to him. He'll stop this noise." And even as she said these words, she nearly leapt out of her chair with fright, for now Mr. Bass was close to her on the other side of the door, violently turning the handle, turning it this way and that, trying to open the door, beating it, hammering it with his fists, and with each hammer Mrs. Bass's head jumped more and more back.

Silence followed and she breathed with relief. It was passing, the paroxysm—but she spoke too soon, for now he was at the telephone—one stood by his bed—and he was shouting down it to someone at the other end that he had been robbed, burgled, and the police must be summoned at once, that instant. And then Mrs. Bass became really frightened and wondered what she should do. The police; she had not bargained for the police, and Paris police! Inspiration came. She flew to her door and before you could say knife, she was in the lift and shooting down to the bureau and to a distracted reception clerk, a relief one, who had taken the place of the one who harboured suspicions about husbands while he was off duty.

He stood with the receiver to his ear and was shouting: "*Comment? Allo!* Ze police? *Un voleur. Ou? Une petite boite,* wid a stamp, *un timbre. Oui, Monsieur. Je comprends. Tout de suite. Police. Tout de suite.*"

"Wait," cried Mrs. Bass. "Stop." She snatched the receiver from him and hung it up. "Listen. A gentleman in number forty-two is asking you to send for the police, saying that he has been robbed of a stamp. I am his wife in number forty-three. Don't answer him," the telephone bell had begun to ring again, "and don't send for the police. He"—she leaned towards the clerk confidentially and whispered—"he's peculiar. He has an attack of—well," her voice became lower, "he's drunk. Do you understand, do you understand English? You *do.* Well, he was very tired after a long journey and he just took a little too much to drink. He's very easily affected. It's very terrible, most distressing." Mrs. Bass's voice was torn with shame and sorrow, while her lips quivered, and the clerk looked discreetly away. "And when he's like this," she continued, recovering herself, "he imagines he's been robbed. Sometimes it's money, or his watch, or a tie-pin. To-day it's a stamp, he's a stamp collector."

"But, Madame, ze telephone"—the bell was still furiously ringing—"what am I to do——?"

"Just reply you have sent for the police and then disconnect the wire."

"What does he say?" Anxiously she watched the clerk as, with the receiver to his ear, he awaited Mr. Bass's reply.

"'E's calmer, Madame, but 'e wants me to come up to 'is room."

"Say it's impossible, you are too busy, but the police will be round in half an hour, also the best private detective in Paris."

"Very good, Madame."

"Now have the telephone disconnected and say nothing of this to *anybody.*" Fifty francs passed from Mrs. Bass to the clerk, who felt, as his hand closed over the crisp new note, very sorry for her, and he remarked to his wife that night it was sad that English and American gentlemen carried their drink so badly, and took whisky instead of wine.

VIII.

Mrs. Bass returned to her room and again seated herself in the chair near the crack.

She felt exhausted and sad at having had to tell so many lies. Naturally a truthful woman, they had really hurt her. Yet she did not regret her pursuit of Mr. Bass. Mrs. Bass rarely regretted an action of hers. Once put her hand to the plough, she invariably completed her furrow. An apartment-house, penury and black-beetles still loomed large in her mental vision. Something had to be done. Archibald had to be checked.

She had slipped the small silver box in her bag, which was capacious, before her flight to the bureau, and now, for something to do, she took it out and, opening it, examined the stamp.

"Nine thousand pounds for *that,* for that mean-looking, ugly, anæmic object. Archibald must be mad. He needs a lesson. . . ."

There was silence in the next room, an immensely silent silence which at first Mrs. Bass scarcely noticed, but which after a while began to make itself felt and troubled her a little.

What was Archibald doing? After the recent cataclysm of sound it seemed uncanny. . . . What was he doing? Was he there? Had he gone out? Was he ill?

Had the shock of his loss caused a stroke? Men so quickly had strokes, men who were getting on. She had heard of a man who had one through temper, at a collar-stud refusing to enter the hole of a hard-boiled shirt.

The silence continued. Mrs. Bass became alarmed. She got up and once again noiselessly drew back the bolt, and with infinite caution opened the door and peeped into Mr. Bass's room.

He was sitting up in bed; he had evidently returned to bed after his violent outburst, either for comfort and warmth or because he was spent; his face was buried in his hands, his hair stood up from his head like the wispy, rumpled feathers of a moulting parrot, his shoulders were bent, his whole attitude one of complete abandonment, a pathetic, forlorn, little, humped-up figure of a man.

Mrs. Bass's heart of a sudden seemed to melt within her, only a slight melting, a curious and unusual sensation, and she drew herself up with a jerk. Mrs. Bass was not accustomed to her heart playing tricks with her like this, but she could not withdraw her eyes from that woebegone figure, and, however much she tried not to, she continued to gaze, and as she gazed her heart began melting again. This was absurd. . . . Nine thousand pounds. . . . An apartment-house, black-beetles. She refused to melt. Then a little sound broke from Mr. Bass, only a whimper like that of a small child or a dog in distress, and this hurt Mrs. Bass; but she clutched at her heart, it should *not* melt. The whimper was followed by a half-strangled sob, and this again by a whole sob, and then, as if he could struggle against his grief no longer, Mr. Bass burst into a passion of tears and spoke aloud: "It serves me right. I wouldn't buy her the pendant, though she wanted it so badly, poor little Amanda. I was a selfish beast." Tears were raining through Mr. Bass's fingers, which covered his eyes and nose, and trickled into his mouth, and suddenly Mrs. Bass's own eyes filled, but she shook the drops away quite angrily. . . . "And she pleaded with me." ("I didn't," said Mrs. Bass to herself. "I wouldn't plead with the President, much less a husband.") "Poor little woman, so it serves me right. . . . All the time I've been saving for"—Mr. Bass was here quite choked with sobs and could scarcely go on—"for the Stamp. I guessed some day it might be on the market, that he—he would die and it would be sold. . . . And it was." Tears were now running down his chin and dropping on to the eiderdown. "And I got it. *I* outbid them all . . ." The sobbing voice for a moment became triumphant. "I got it, beat the lot of them . . . and now it's gone, stolen by some wretched philatelist who's shadowed me—gone for ever. Oh—er——"

Mr. Bass's voice rose in wailing agony of grief, "I shall never see it again and—and—it serves me right. . . . Amanda, poor little Amanda. . . ." He buried his face in the eiderdown, and Mrs. Bass could bear it no longer. With her own eyes streaming, her heart inside her in such a melting condition that she felt it was running down into her shoes, she turned about, went back to her own room, then through the other door to the passage, knocked at Mr. Bass's door—never do to take him by surprise, on account of shocks and strokes—and went in.

"Archibald!"

Mr. Bass's head jumped up from the eiderdown with a jerk like the head of a Jack-in-the-box when the lid is removed, and with swollen eyes he stared at Mrs. Bass.

"Amanda!"

Mrs. Bass advanced to the bed.

"What is the matter, Archibald?"

"Matter!"

"You are in trouble."

"I—not a bit of it. I——" For a moment Mr. Bass made a gallant effort to pull himself together, to prevaricate, to lie, to throw Mrs. Bass off the scent, to pretend he was ill, sickening for influenza or typhoid, but suddenly he felt too weak, too spent; he felt like a little exhausted child that longs to unburden its soul, to confess. . . . His face crinkled up, his mouth quivered; tears, however hard he tried to prevent them, once again gushed from his eyes. He yearned for a kind shoulder in which to bury his head, and for someone to comfort him, and—there was no one. For how could he guess Mrs. Bass's shoulder was ready?

"Amanda, I've something to confess to you. . . . I—I'm sorry. I'm ashamed. . . . I came to Paris to buy the famous British Guiana stamp if I could. And I did. I got it. I paid one million one hundred and sixteen thousand francs—forty-five thousand dollars—for it. I knew I oughtn't, but I couldn't help it."

Mr. Bass, sitting up in the middle of the bed, looked so rumpled that Mrs. Bass longed to put him straight.

"Well?" She sat down on the bed beside him.

"It's gone."

"Gone?"

"It's been stolen." His voice broke and he turned his head away. "I'm the most wretched man in the world and the most selfish. I—I refused to give you that pendant at Cannes. C-can you ever forgive me, Amanda? Only five thousand dollars, and I spent forty-five thousand on the stamp and—it's gone."

"No, it hasn't." Mrs. Bass put her arms round Mr. Bass and for a moment held him closely. He was so very rumpled and woebegone and cold. "It hasn't, Archibald. It's here. Look."

She slipped the little silver box into his hand and watched the crinkles in his face straighten out into amazement, and crinkle again into smiles, and the light creep into his tear-stained eyes, and heard laughter break from him, and she found herself whispering to herself: "Thank God. I'm not too late to love him."

"Amanda, what does it mean?"

"Only this. I stole it from you to teach you a lesson, and—incidentally—I've learnt one."

"What?"

"That sympathy, understanding—oh, never mind. Archibald, we'll go stamp-hunting together."

THE OLD FIDDLER.

CHRISTMAS laughter! Christmas folly!
Merry times and melancholy!
Mistletoe and thorny holly!
Life is sad, and life is jolly!

Fiddler with the snow-white hair,
Wrinkled brow, and coat threadbare,
That's a ditty full of tears,
Throbbing, sobbing, down the years!
Change the tune, for Heaven's sake,
Or my heavy heart will break!

Fiddler with the twinkling eyes,
Youth's a mood that never dies!
That's a ditty full of glee,
Laughter, mischief, revelry;
Dancing hours are flying fast,
Too sweet to lose, too swift to last!

Fiddler, fiddler, when you play,
Life's a medley, grave and gay;
Reel, lament, fandango, vie
With dirge, gavotte and lullaby!
Weave your mystic, magic spell;
Glad or sad, 'tis Life, 'tis well!

Christmas laughter! Christmas folly!
Merry times and melancholy!
Mistletoe and thorny holly!
Life is sad, and life is jolly!

FRED W. BAYLISS.



" Peggy said slowly, ' It's a ticklish thing buying pictures for other people. I'd leave it alone if I were you.' "

A CHRISTMAS PROVIDENCE

By AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON

ILLUSTRATED BY KENNETH INNS

JOHN ARCHIBALD came out of the British Museum with an abstracted air. He was a rather attractive young man in a queer way: not a regular feature in his face, but eyes that got at you with their honest kindliness and a mouth that hinted at humour.

He looked at the pigeons without realising them, shivered a little, hastened his steps and emerged at the gates almost in a run.

" That place is always too warm," he thought.

The man into whom he cannoned was also travelling briskly at the moment of impact. He gave Archibald an angry glance, then his face cleared: " You, Archibald ! " he said. " Walk along with me a moment, there's a good chap. I'm in a tearing hurry."

They hastened in the direction of Southampton Row.

" I might have guessed it was you," went on Foster. " Man, is your head ever anywhere but in the clouds ? "

" Did you bring me along with you to

hear that ? " Archibald asked, stepping off the pavement almost in front of a car.

The other gripped him firmly by the sleeve. " No, I didn't," he said. " I say, what are you doing at Christmas ? "

Archibald looked surprised. " Going to Maisie's, I suppose," he said. " I always do. My sister, you know."

" Oh, I know that all right," Foster said, grinning. " I also know that she is in Italy."

John Archibald stopped dead. " Oh, come along ! " exclaimed the other. " I'm in a ghastly hurry. Surely you knew Maisie was abroad ? "

" Did know, but I had forgotten," Archibald admitted confusedly. " I'd been wondering a bit that I hadn't heard from her about trains and all that. But, of course, I'd have gone down anyhow. Really, I am dreadful, and I grow worse. I must begin thinking things out for myself, arranging trains and all that."

" Better marry," said Foster. " Then you'd have to look 'em out for somebody else. That would cure you ! But listen, what I wanted to say was—if you are likely to be in town for Christmas, you might look up my young sister. She lives round about here with a girl chum. I'll give you her address. We were going off together, but I've been wired for to go to my Uncle Simon ; the old chap's ill. So Peggy will be left on her own. I've written to some people about her, but I doubt if they can fix her up. Her chum's going off, goes to-day. So if you can look the kid up——"

" I remember meeting a sister of yours," began Archibald in a frightened way. " Stunning girl——"

" Oh, not that one. She's married and done for. Peggy is the youngest. I'll scrawl the address on this envelope——"

Archibald still looked frightened. He was as shy as he was clever ; and that's saying a lot for his shyness. He supposed he would stay in town, for he could not think of anything else to do.

" There you are. And Christmas, lest you forget, is on Tuesday," said Foster. " Well, then, I leave the kid to you."

With which blinding remark he hailed a taxi and vanished.

Archibald let a couple of days go by. Might as well give the folk Foster had mentioned a chance of doing something for the girl ; and, anyhow, he—Archibald—was horribly busy ; also, he was no prize companion for any girl.

Then he found a general bustle and excitement rather disintegrating his usual quiet. His conscience, too, proved disturbing. He suddenly visioned a disappointed and disconsolate Peggy. Perhaps Foster had told her that he—Archibald—might appear, and she was watching for him.

Archibald groaned, flushed, then seized his hat and set out for Bloomsbury.

He rather hurried. This was Thursday, and Christmas was on Tuesday. You would have thought he was trying to catch up with the flight of time.

It was a small flat at the top of the mansions and there was no lift. The latter fact did not bother Archibald : he never realised stairs enough to be bothered by them. Up he went, shyly disturbed at the thought of the interview before him.

There were two bells, he found, by the door of No. 42 : one calling upon Miss Margaret Foster, the other bringing to the door Miss Linda Pugh. Well, thank goodness, the latter was away : there would not be *two* girls to strike him speechless with their bright eyes and laugh at his discomfiture when he was gone.

He rang Miss Foster's bell firmly.

There was no immediate response and hope rose in Archibald. Perhaps Peggy Foster had fixed up some diversion for herself for the Christmas season, and had taken her departure. On the other hand she might merely be out, gazing in shop-windows, and buying all kinds of extraordinary things ; like the crowds Archibald had noted with astonishment.

Could he ever bring himself to call again ?

While he sighed and shook his head footsteps sounded on a bare passage and the door opened.

She wasn't a bit like Foster. Odd, Archibald reflected vaguely, that Foster, who was a plain, not to say an ugly chap, should have two such toppingly beautiful sisters. For this girl *was* beautiful, though not with the sweeping and conscious beauty of her sister.

She was small, for one thing : that fact eased Archibald : her dark chestnut hair was tumbled as well as curly : her little round chin had almost a sulky stubborn look : her dark eyes looked as if she had been crying. She stared out at John Archibald with a distinctly unfriendly air,

like a child who feels she has been left too long alone.

Those reddened eyes got at John Archibald: he forgot all about being shy. He thought only of being kind. Also he was conscience-stricken. No wonder the kid looked crossly at him: he was the cause of all the weeping: he ought to have turned up before.

"You're Foster's sister Peggy, aren't you?" he said. "He asked me to look you up. You see—er—I am in town alone for Christmas, and he thought you might take pity on me, and cheer me up a bit. We might plan something for Christmas Day. Perhaps he mentioned me to you?—My name's Archibald, John Archibald. I have known old Tommy for years."

She shook her head. "No, Tom didn't mention you," she said. Her chin wavered as if she were going to do some more crying; but even as a cold fear ran through Archibald at the thought it steadied almost haughtily. "Oh, perhaps he did," the girl said. "He said a friend *might* turn up."

"He may have meant the other people," said Archibald. "However, never mind. I wonder if you'd come out somewhere and have tea with me now?"

She looked down at the green overall she wore. "No, no, I'm painting," she said. "At least, I've just finished. You must come in and have some tea with me."

He followed her along the tiled passage: she wore queer little green shoes with high heels: they made him think of birds.

"Would you like tea in the studio?" she asked, "or in the kitchen? I don't use the sitting-room much in winter 'cause of the bother of keeping it warm. I share the studio with another girl, but she's away."

"I love kitchens," said John Archibald; "but I have never been in a studio."

"Ah, then I expect you'd like the studio," said the girl, and led the way into it.

It was a large room and well lighted, though the light was now going. There was a gas-fire at each end. Several odd but comfortable chairs stood about: there were two or three easels. Archibald noticed vaguely some rather gorgeous hangings suspended here and there on the walls in a rather patchy way. Innumerable canvases lay about. The floor was polished and had a rug or two.

Altogether a jolly room, but one you could be lonely in, especially if you were used to having a companion in it.

"Let me help to get tea, Peggy," Archibald said with a sudden glow of affection for this poor pretty sulky kid. "I think I may call you Peggy, mayn't I?—I know Foster so well."

"Call me anything you like," said she, still a little sulkily.

"'Wish I had come before," he said.

"Why?" Peggy demanded sharply.

Archibald flushed with confusion. "Christmas is so near; I've missed some of the fun," he said. "We're going to have a spanking time."

Peggy's dark eyes brightened. "I'll take off this overall," she said.

"Oh, don't," cried Archibald. "I simply love green."

At that she condescended to smile. "I'll put the kettle on. The tea is in that box on the mantelshelf, the cups and saucers are in the corner-cupboard."

While Archibald found cups and saucers she cleared a space of easels and canvases. Her movements were blithe and quick like those of a bird. It was obvious that she was really a happy kindly little creature.

"*I* made the lace on that tea-cloth; nice, isn't it?" she asked. She spread the cloth lovingly and gave it a pat.

Archibald said warmly, "Charming." He hadn't the least idea to what lace she referred.

They had tea lounging, each of them, in a deep chair at opposite sides of the gas-fire. The chit made Archibald pour out, and he found himself an adept at the task. She became happier and happier. Into her air crept a dash: in her eyes was the defiant happiness of a child who dares fate to give her again the loneliness she has escaped from.

"Well, what shall we do on Christmas Day?" Archibald asked at last. He meant to add, "No use leaving it to me, for I am hopeless," but bit his lips on the words. No, he was taking care of this sister of Foster's: he must give her a good time; and, if it were necessary, suggest the arrangement of it.

But, as it happened, he was not called upon to suggest anything. This sister of Foster's knew what she wanted to do, and how to set about it.

"Don't let's go anywhere on Christmas Day," she said—"I mean, for dinner. Let us buy things and have dinner here. I'll do the cooking."

"Then I'll do the shopping," said Archibald.

Peggy chuckled. "Do you know anything about shopping?" she asked.

Archibald hesitated. "One learns," he said at last.

"*Not* on the Christmas dinner," said Peggy firmly.

He looked so crestfallen that the girl, becoming more and more cheerful, took pity on him. "Oh, all right, you can take it on," she said.

"Perhaps if we shopped together——" began Archibald.

She clapped her hands. "That would be best of all, ever such a rag," she said.

When it was time to go Archibald hesitated. "Couldn't you do something with me to-night?" he asked. His tone was more eager than he knew. Never had he got on as well with any girl as with this one in the green overall with her tumbled curls.

Peggy, too, hesitated.

"Dinner and a theatre," Archibald suggested boldly.

The dark eyes lighted, then suddenly she shook her head, and the light in her eyes died.

"Why not?" he asked, disappointed.

She in her turn hesitated; then, suddenly, she laughed. "It's my clothes," she said. "I go in for artistic kind of rags, which I make, more or less, myself. You mightn't like to be seen with me."

"Are they green?" he asked eagerly.

A real chuckle broke from Peggy this time. "Lordy, I believe you are going to like them," she said. "Oh, all right, then. I'll come."

They fixed up a meeting-place.

Archibald hastened away.

He enjoyed himself in the most extraordinary way dashing about, getting tickets for a theatre, buying a posy of flowers with green leaves about it, thinking out a good place in which to have dinner and the best way of getting at it.

All this was very unlike Archibald's ordinary way of life: he found it fascinating.

She was a nice kid—he doubted if she were a day more than seventeen—and there was something peculiarly pleasant about making that little red mouth smile, those golden eyes fill with laughter. To be somebody's Providence—even if one only provided amusement—was quite a new experience for John Archibald.

They were seated at dinner together. Yes, Peggy wore a green frock, a picturesque arrangement with wide filmy sleeves that floated out like green wings when she moved her arms. Her cloak was green, too, a darker shade. So were her little slippers. Round the dark chestnut curls was a tiny green band.

She was, Archibald told himself, like a pixie of the woods. Or was she like a changeling? One had the idea that at any moment she might fade away, return to that magic country to which she rightfully belonged.

"What are you thinking about?" she asked him curiously. The little posy of flowers was pinned to her frock. She had been quite touchingly delighted with it.

"I am thinking that you are like a fairy child," Archibald said. Then he flushed. Already he felt that he knew her so well; but perhaps she looked on him more or less as a stranger, or just her brother's friend.

But she pouted, answered childishly, "Let me tell you, I'm eighteen." She added, "And earning my own living, too."

Archibald was absurdly happy. He asked, "Shall I call you Granny, then?"

Her eyes danced. She sniffed at the posy on her shoulder. "Don't be impertinent—John," she said.

A sweet pang went through Archibald at the name. Ah, if she faded away, this fairy creature, she would leave him with that ache at his heart which tortures those who have lost their love to fairy folk.

She moved to the door as he paid the bill. A man and woman who had come in noticed her. Archibald heard their remarks.

"Pretty girl—and a pretty turn-out," said the man.

"Very picturesque," said the lady. "Don't suppose the entire turn-out cost a guinea. She's an artist, I should say, and put it together herself. I believe she covered the slippers."

"Clever kid," said the man.

His companion laughed. "Probably has to be clever," she said lightly. "All artists, more or less, are poor."

Archibald moved away thoughtfully. He was still thoughtful as he helped Peggy into the waiting taxi.

"Anyone you knew in the restaurant?" Peggy asked, with an effort after carelessness.

"Not a soul," said John Archibald, rousing himself; "but I don't know a great number of people."

"There wasn't a soul *I* knew," said Peggy. Her tone sounded satisfied.

Archibald laughed. "I believe you're ashamed of having an escort who is so out of things," he said.

She said quickly, "If you knew——" then abruptly paused.

"If I knew what?" he prompted.

"What a good time I am having," she said.

Archibald was a little disappointed. But she began to chatter happily and his spirits again rose. They went, laughing, into the theatre.

The play was a great success—as far as two members of the audience were concerned.

But at the back of Archibald's mind was an uneasy suspicion, put there by the short colloquy he had overheard.

He had thought Peggy had been crying for sheer loneliness when he first discovered her; but what if she had been crying for other reasons? She didn't seem the kind of kid who would cry her eyes out because she had been left alone for once in her life. Perhaps money, or, rather, the lack of it, was her bother. To be sure, Foster was rich and Archibald knew him to be generous, but this was the kind of fierce little girl who would not acknowledge that she needed help. Archibald's heart brooded over her. There came to him a kind of tenderness.

The practical affairs of life being a new subject for his contemplation, Archibald had to rack his brains for some time over his problem. Then an idea leapt at him from out the blue. Why, of course,—why had he not thought of this at once? Everybody was buying Christmas presents just now; he would merely be beginning late what most folk had begun early. And what more natural than that he should buy *pictures*? As a matter of fact, he knew more about pictures than he knew about most things outside his special line.

He had arranged to call for Peggy and go shopping on this afternoon of the day after the theatre-party. He started out with the brilliant new idea simmering in his brain.

Her hat was on when she opened the door, a little brown hat that sat sideways on her head and gave her a Puckish aspect of mischief.

"Come in. I'll be ready in a minute," she said. "I can't find the gloves that go with this coat."

She took him to the studio, then disappeared.

On the mantelshelf, at the end nearest him, was an unframed canvas. Archibald, his idea in his mind, rose and examined it.

The painting was signed in a corner, Margaret Foster. It was of a handful of flowers, rather charmingly thrown together, painted with a certain dexterity—and that was all. It had, Archibald knew, the prettiness that might appeal to eight people out of ten; but to him it seemed—just what it was, and worthless.

"Like it?" asked Peggy brightly.

She had come into the studio and was standing twisting her gloves in her hand—they were shabby, and did not match the coat—Archibald noticed a shadow on her face in spite of her bright tone.

Did the poor kid suspect how feeble her work was? Archibald said hastily, his tenderness up in arms for her, "I'm buying one or two things for Christmas presents. Awfully difficult to know what people would like. I thought a picture or two wouldn't be a bad idea, and would be an out-of-the-ordinary kind of Christmas present. I'd like to have one or two of yours."

Peggy said slowly, "It's a ticklish thing buying pictures for other people. I'd leave it alone if I were you."

"Nice advice to come from an artist!" Archibald said. "I can tell you I wouldn't stop anybody from buying my books, even if I knew how dry they'd find 'em."

"*I* mean to buy one," said Peggy promptly. She stared him in the eye.

"Oh, come, what do you know about Ancient——" began Archibald in a distressed tone.

She burst out laughing. "There—you see!" she said.

"Oh, all right, I'll give you one for a Christmas present," said Archibald. It was a sudden idea, and he was fascinated by his own brightness. "But for goodness' sake don't give copies to your friends. They won't thank you."

"Perhaps *you* thought of giving me a picture for a Christmas present?" he suggested a moment later. Her face had become suddenly downcast: he thought perhaps this was the reason.

"No, I didn't," she said decidedly.

His face now fell. Of course, it had been absurd of him to imagine that she would give him a present at Christmas-time.

"I've thought of something else for you," she said.

His face lighted. Peggy watched it in a fascinated way, then she frowned; but

the frown seemed to be more for herself than for Archibald.

"But I really want," he insisted, "to buy a picture of yours."

"I shouldn't have expected," she said slowly, "that my work would attract you."

Archibald said with sudden fervour, and on impulse, "I should love to have anything of yours."

"Ah, then you mean it for yourself!" said she. Their eyes met. Peggy blushed. Then she frowned again. "Oh, well, buy one," she said. She nodded at the flowers. "That painting is for sale."

Archibald looked round. "Any seascapes? I rather love 'em."

She shook her head with its rakish hat. "Don't go in for them," she said. "They're more in Linda's line. 'Fact is, I haven't much for sale at all." Her tone changed: she said proudly, "My things are very popular. Some people came in the other day and almost cleared me out."

Her voice was defiant.

Archibald felt relieved, yet a little disturbed, too. He wished she had not felt proud of painting this kind of stuff, and yet —well, he would have hated to see her suffer over her work; and suffer she must if she realised how poor it was.

"There is quite a little nest of canvases over there," he said, nodding toward the wall.

Peggy's golden eyes followed the glance. "Oh, those are Linda's," she said carelessly. She added, "People simply won't buy them. But, then, if you insist on painting things that people don't want——"

Archibald crossed to the wall. He picked up a couple of canvases, turned them over. Seascapes both of them, little wild storm scenes: you could see the wind in them, feel the shrill yell of the storm.

He returned to his chair, bringing them with him. "Well, I'll have this, anyway," he said, taking up the flower-study. There was a forced enthusiasm in his tone. As carelessly as he could he asked, "How much?"

"The price," Peggy said in a businesslike tone, "is on the back. Some people were looking at it the other day."

Archibald turned it over. "Twenty-five pounds," he said. "Well, that's all right."

But Peggy was peeping over his shoulder, standing on the chair to do so. "No, it's fifteen pounds," she said.

"H'm, so it is," said Archibald, pretending to peer. "Fifteen pounds, then. That's settled." He turned his attention to the seascapes. "There is no price on these," he said. "Perhaps they are not for sale?"

"Oh yes, they are." Peggy was certain of it. She turned her face away.

"Do you mind if I buy them, too?" Archibald asked diffidently. You would have thought that she kept his purse.

Peggy laughed shortly. "No, of course I don't. She'll be very glad, I don't doubt, —Linda, I mean."

"What is she like?" Archibald asked curiously.

"A hateful little beast!" Peggy said with sudden passion.

John Archibald was startled. "My dear!" he said, and put a hand on the girl's shoulder.

He felt that the shoulder quivered. A great tenderness overwhelmed him. "You don't mean that," he said.

There was genius in the little wild paintings: it was conceivable that the painter of them might be difficult to live with: on the other hand, there was that in them that suggested a fierce tenderness.

"Oh, I'm a pig," said Peggy, rubbing her eyes with her gloves; "but we won't talk about her."

A sudden flash of enlightenment came to John Archibald. There was a jealousy perhaps between the two girls. Perhaps Peggy realised in her heart that in spite of apparent success she had failed; that in spite of apparent failure the other girl had succeeded. "You are the dearest girl in the world," he said.

She smiled radiantly, then she backed away, went to the window and looked out. When she came back she said, "What about this Christmas shopping? There will be nothing left in the shops."

"I'm ready if you are," said Archibald. He added tentatively, "I'll have the two little seascapes as well as the painting of yours. The price doesn't seem to be on the back of *them*."

"No one has wanted to buy them," said Peggy with a grimace. She added, "I think five pounds each."

"Not enough," said Archibald.

But Peggy frowned at him. "She has asked less and not got rid of them!" she said.

So John Archibald had to agree.

Peggy said with a sudden quick smile, "She'll be absolutely delighted to have sold them."

The streets were crowded, and shopping

was a more arduous business than Archibald had anticipated. But with Peggy radiant and singularly uplifted at his side, Archibald enjoyed every minute of the afternoon and was regretful when it neared its close.

He insisted on buying a goose.

"It will last for *years*," declared Peggy.

"Never mind," said Archibald happily. "What is Christmas without a goose?"

They carried everything they bought, and to Archibald fell the joy of bearing the goose. It was in a fish basket, which he slung on his arm.

"You look," said Peggy, dimpling, "—er—picturesque and, shall we say, unusual?"

"I don't care tuppence," he retorted, "how I look."

Peggy sighed. "I'm beginning to understand you," she said.

Archibald was at once depressed. "And is that why you sigh?" he asked.

She nodded. "Yes, because you're so nice and I'm so—horrid," she said.

"Oh, if that's all! I don't think you have cause for weeping," Archibald said jubilantly. "Wait till you discover what a duffer I am——"

"Absent-minded, you mean? Lordy, I know all about that already!" said she, dimpling.

"Let's go in here and have tea," said Archibald.

At the tea-shop they wrangled over the shopping bills, but Archibald succeeded in getting his own way. "You provide the cooking," said he firmly, "I provide the fare."

Peggy regarded their multitude of packages with pride. "We are going to have some Christmas!" she said.

Archibald's glance was as full of satisfaction as the girl's. He said fervently, "The happiest—thanks to you—I have ever had."

They climbed to the top of a 'bus with the intention of taking their parcels to the studio; but on the way passed a cinema where the "Christmas Carol" was being shown.

Simultaneously they rose to their feet.

"Yes, let us see it," said Archibald.

They clambered down the steps, fell out of the 'bus, and entered the cinema.

At a considerably later hour they put in an appearance at the mansions.

"I'll just leave these things and hurry off," said Archibald. "If we want to do a show to-night, there isn't much time to spare."

Peggy gave an ecstatic sigh. "What a time I'm having!" she said.

They littered the studio floor with their parcels. Archibald regarded them with satisfaction, but Peggy knit her brows. She searched among them, turning this over and that. Then she glanced up at the somewhat anxious Archibald. Her eyes were full of mischief. "You clever thing, I can't think how you managed it!" she said.

"Managed what?" asked Archibald.

She burst out laughing. "Why, you have succeeded in losing the goose!"

"Impossible!" exclaimed he.

But it was a cruel fact. The goose might have been left in the tea-shop, on the 'bus-top, in the cinema. In any case, it had vanished from their ken.

Man and girl looked at each other; then they burst into whole-hearted laughter.

"Let's get a chicken; a chicken is more our size," said Peggy. She added, a thoughtful look in her eye, "Besides, I *do* know how to cook a chicken."

It was Christmas Eve. John Archibald sat at the table in his sitting-room, regarding with fond satisfaction an open box. It was a pretty box, covered with some kind of greenish silken material, and in it were a dozen pairs of gloves of varying shades.

Yes, he reflected, gloating over them, gloves seemed to be the right present for Peggy. Of course, he would give her some flowers too; rather a lot of flowers; you couldn't have too many. Then candies and chocolates: he knew a shop, he had discovered it for himself, where chocolates were to be had of a variety and gorgeousness of which he had not hitherto dreamt.

They had planned out Christmas Day: carols, that wonderful dinner, the evening at Bridgeman's——

Archibald rose with a contented sigh. Oh, he was having no end of a Christmas. He had meant to act the rôle of good fairy, but he had fallen in love with a fairy instead.

He was taking Peggy out to lunch to-day. Rather early; yet still, he might as well go along and fetch her.

He reached the studio early. Peggy opened the door in an overall—not the green one, but another, brown with green leaves on it. "I thought it was you," she

said with a happy smile. "I'm tying up parcels and sending off cards."

The studio had a decidedly Christmaslike appearance: holly and mistletoe lay in a

"'May I ask what you are doing in this flat?' Peggy asked sharply."



corner, a table was heaped with parcels, sheets of notepaper lay here and there.

"Don't talk while I address this," Peggy said earnestly. She knelt on the floor by a small table and, her cheeks rosy, hastily scribbled an address on a letter.

"If you think letters and parcels posted to-day will arrive to-morrow, I rather

think you are mistaken," said Archibald.

"*Don't talk*," commanded Peggy, frowning. "Anyhow, it can't be helped."

Presently she got up, rummaging about among a heap of envelopes. "I simply must have three more cards," she said. "Do you mind keeping house while I run and get 'em? There's a shop at the corner that has some quite decent ones. I shan't be a minute, and I shall be quicker without you."

"You've left a lot of notes here," Archibald said with an admonishing air. "On the corner of the mantelpiece. You shouldn't leave money lying about like that."

"Oh, that's for—er—Linda," she said, flushing. "It's the money you paid for her pictures. I'll get a Money Order when we go out—but not now."

She vanished. After a moment Archibald heard the front door shut after her.

There were three five-pound notes on the shelf, not two. Archibald smiled in a tender way. After all, she had felt obliged to give the other girl the extra note for her paintings. Well, well, he must make it up to her. He didn't quite see how he was to do it, but——

He was deep in his reflections when the sound of the front door opening and shutting roused him. The kid had been very quick, he thought.

He heard steps in the passage, then the door of the studio swung open.

But the girl who stood on the threshold of the room staring at him with surprise and suspicion was not his fairy, with her chestnut hair and little proud chin. This was a tall slim girl, whose fair face puzzled Archibald a little in its resemblance to some face he knew. Her hair was golden; her eyes of a clear blue.

"May I ask what you are doing in this flat?" she asked sharply.

You might have said that she suspected him of theft, burglary, or something of the



sort. Perhaps she did. Perhaps she had not known of the collapse of Peggy's plans and expected to find the flat empty.

Archibald had risen. This girl must be Linda Pugh. He said, a little nervously,—the young lady rather frightened him—"My name is Archibald, John Archibald. I am a friend of——"

But the face of the girl at the door had changed. Smiling in a frank way, she advanced, holding out a hand, "Oh, of course, you are my brother's friend; Florrie—my sister—knows you too. Tom wrote to me that you might come along and look me up, but it was only just a chance; and when the Williams's called and carried me off in their car, I didn't think it necessary to send a line to you. But how did you get into the flat, that's what I can't understand? Linda was leaving the same day as I—just about an hour after I went."

John Archibald said slowly, "Sometimes plans get upset——"

"Don't I know it?" said Peggy Foster, smiling. She added, "I have only blown in to fetch my evening-cloak, which I had forgotten. Where is Linda, then?"

He said confusedly, "She ran out to get some—Christmas-cards."

"What a pity! I shall miss her. 'Fraid I can't stop: they're waiting for me in the car below. 'Didn't know anyone was here, you see. So you are being kind to Linda instead of to me? How sweet of you. Please give her my love." The fair girl paused, then added, "There's a parcel for her in the passage: it's my Christmas present to her. I forgot to get her address before I left and hoped to find some letter here that would give it. Lordy, Linda shouldn't leave her money lying about like that." She was glancing at the notes on the shelf. "But perhaps," she looked at Archibald, "it is yours."

"No," John Archibald said, "it is *yours*, —for a painting of yours which—er—Linda sold."

"How noble of her! Really, I am having crowds of luck," smiled the girl. "I sold several before I went away."

She took up the notes, crammed them into a bag she carried. Then "Good-bye, I must be off," she said.

Archibald heard her go into a room—no doubt to fetch the cloak she spoke of—then the front door clanged again.

She was gone.

Archibald did not doubt her in the least.

She was pretty, but she was unmistakably the sister of Tom Foster.

He dropped into a chair, rested his head on a hand. His vision was of a fiercely proud little face with mutinous chin but tender or dancing eyes. His poor little kid . . .

After a minute or two, he raised his head sharply. Yes, someone had come in: the front door shut with a bang. Little feet hurried along the passage. The studio door flew open.

The girl he had known as Peggy Foster burst into the room. Her face was flushed, her little red mouth unsteady, her goldy eyes very bright.

She cast the envelope she was holding on to the table, and faced John Archibald. He rose to his feet.

"Well, now you know the truth!" she cried passionately. "You know exactly the kind of hateful little beast I am! I've just seen Peggy. She told me she had seen you."

"And what then?" Archibald asked gently. He put a hand on her arm, but she cast if off fiercely. "Oh, you didn't give me away," she said. "Of course, you wouldn't." She swung away from him, went to the window and looked out. "Do you mind going away?" she said over her shoulder. "You are too nice to say anything horrid, but I know all the things you want to say."

"I don't want to say anything," John Archibald said helplessly, "except that you are trying to do me out of the nicest Christmas I am ever likely to have."

Linda wheeled round on him. "You mean you want to go on with it?" she demanded.

John Archibald's eyes were more than kind: they were tender. "Of course I do," he said.

"You are being sorry for me!" The words were an accusation.

"No," said he, "I am being sorry for myself."

At that the proud little head wavered.

"My dear kid," Archibald said tenderly, "what does it matter to me what your name is? I rather prefer Linda."

She said nothing to that. He added, a touch of humour round his mouth, "And I much prefer Linda's paintings."

She was still silent, and he went towards her. "You must not say unkind things about Linda. I won't have it," he said gently.

The goldy eyes met his defiantly. "I

took you on—I pretended to be Peggy just for—just for a rag!" she said.

"I see," said Archibald. He smiled, "Well, the rag has been a jolly one, hasn't it? Why not go on with it? You are making me very happy, you know. So happy that I want to ask you to go on making life a rag for me. Linda dear, I'll do my best to give you a good time, if you'll marry me. I've been meaning to ask you—oh, for ages. I know I'm a complete duffer at some things——"

"Oh, but you aren't," she cried passionately. "You're the best pal a girl could have. But you must know the truth. I—I *didn't* do it for a rag." Her voice faltered. "I was having a bad time. Nobody wanted my work, and I hadn't a lot of friends, like Peggy had. I was always pretending to go out to tea with someone, and going by myself to a tea-shop or for a walk. I *pretended* I had an invitation for Christmas, that I was going away, I——"

Great tears welled into her eyes.

"Dear me, this is dreadful," said John Archibald, in great agitation. He wiped the tears away, then he kissed the eyes that had shed them: that stoppered things up. "Can't you see how I've got the best of it?" he said earnestly. "I'm so awfully in love with Linda, and I'm dreadfully afraid of Peggy."

That did it: the chestnut head steadied. Linda laughed, blushed, said, "Linda means to marry you, anyway."

"We shall have," Archibald said jubilantly, "a gorgeous Christmas."

They had.

THE ROAD TO BETHLEHEM.

COME go with me to-night to Bethlehem—
The old world-way is lighted by a star;
A silver song is ringing through the dusk;
The little village home lights gleam afar;

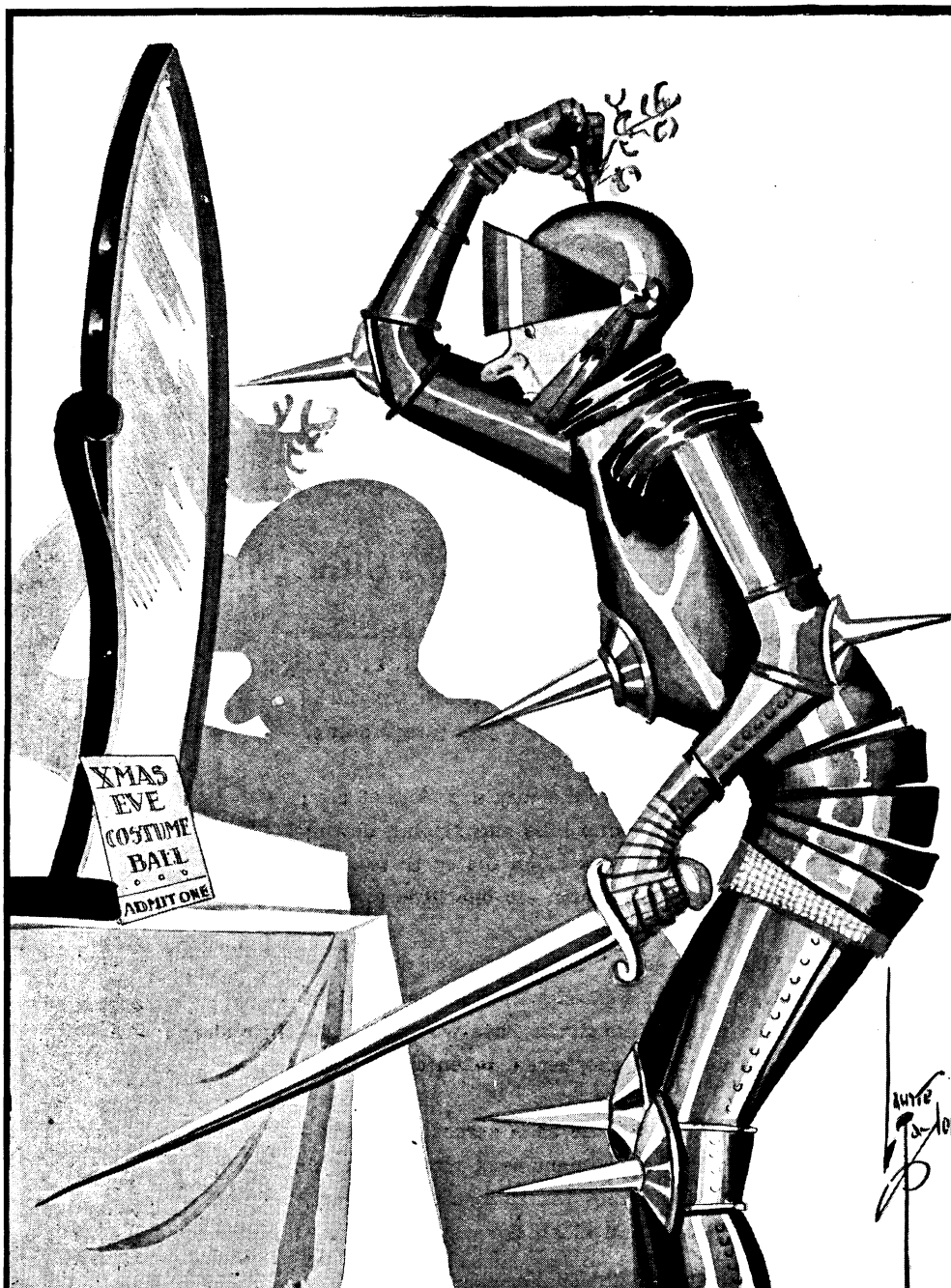
Old vineyards by the way are singing out;
A thousand gentle hills run sloping down;
The winding ways of all the earth to-night
Lead on—light-footed—to one little town.

Mary has gone before us on the way—
O, heart—be hushed with holiness to-night—
The snow-white flocks have wakened from their sleep;
The watching shepherds, taken eager flight.

And suddenly—like bells across the snow—
The old glad poignant song rings out again—
"Behold—I bring you tidings of great joy,"
A far, clear call along the ways of men.

White wings flash high above the waiting fields—
Come, heart of mine, the road is kindled bright—
The whole world walks the beaten path once more,
To seek the little Saviour-King to-night.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.



OPTIMIST.



THE LITTLE PUP HE BROUGHT LAST CHRISTMAS!

MR. BUFFUM TREADS ON IT

By HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

MR. BUFFUM'S mind ran on its own lines, which were extremely well worn. When he retired into the country men he met supposed he'd buy a car now, and Mr. Buffum affably supposed he would, mainly to avoid argument. Knowing he wouldn't. A car meant a chauffeur; a chauffeur meant another cottage: a wife, possibly children; "Any orders for John to-day?" "Thank you, I'd rather go for a quiet walk." More eyes to watch him: more brains to wonder what he did with himself: more people to fall out with each other.

It never occurred to him that he could possibly drive a car himself: any more than in watching his beloved birds fly in the garden it had ever occurred to him that he could spread his arms out and move through the air from tree to tree, singing.

He liked his quiet, orderly life: he liked it very much: pottering in the garden, walking about the lanes, noticing the continual slight changes everywhere as the year progressed; the variety of colour of earth and sky on various days—"never quite the same, you know," he would mildly smile.

Niece Lucia's boisterous entry into his life did not disturb it, but quickened his faculty of appreciation. In his quiet diffident way he grew steadily fonder and fonder of her. He was aware of consideration for him as a human being, and quietly rejoiced in the awareness. He was more used to hostile criticism of look and speech than to acceptance and affection.

"You just come," he used to say, "when you like. You just come." He said it with unwonted emphasis.

And Niece Lucia just came.

She came at 9.15 one Saturday morning in May in what Mr. Buffum, meeting her on the drive, was clever enough to recognise as a strange two-seater, heavier, dingier and older than her nippy red-winged Sports. There was nothing dingy or heavy, however, about its occupant. Dancing mischief bubbled from toe to twinkling eye as she embraced Mr. Buffum rapturously, saying:

"Here she is at last! Magnificent!"

Mr. Buffum wondered what she could be up to now: the whiff of mischief was in the air. He waited for the news to break.

"I left at six-thirty. Jolly good, considering! My goodness! What fun!"

Why had she left at six-thirty? She was so full of something to tell—simply oozing mystery and delight—that he'd only to wait to have it. And it was mischief, mischief for certain. He knew the signs too well, and waited.

"Do you think I might possibly have all you've got to eat in the house put out on the dining-room table and consume it for breakfast? Too thrilling! Planning it for weeks . . . and here we are! I'm starving. I'll take my little bag into the bathroom and have a bath while kind Eliza cooks all she can lay hands on."

"Kind Eliza will be glad to," said Mr. Buffum truthfully and happily, not sorry for a brief respite from what he knew to be the great surprise.

"I expect the dear girl's engaged to be married!" he thought brightly for her sake, stifling the sigh from his own dislike of change, however much for the better her marriage must certainly be, she was so extraordinarily delightful exactly as she was.

Thus he ruminated on the drive, watching her swing along, watching her disappear with a jump into the house, listening to



"Dancing mischief bubbled from toe to twinkling eye as she embraced Mr. Buffum rapturously, saying: 'Here she is at last! Magnificent!'"

sudden laughter from the kitchen—people *did* laugh near Lucia.

He turned to see a small boy, the gardener's son Monnie (short for Monarch), a friend of his, staring engrossed at the car, drawn from nowhere by its magic presence.

"Fancy Miss Lucia in this 'ere! Lumme!" he chuckled as he noticed Mr. Buffum looking at him, and was not at all abashed under the eye of him who was called the Governor. Mr. Buffum's remarkable, almost unnatural, diffidence kept him from handing out advice from his fifty years' store of experience in life to those with fewer years. He blamed himself for this, as for a shirked responsibility, excusing himself on the plea that he really didn't know enough to advise others. So in the boy's mind Mr. Buffum loomed as a funny mixture of ally and saint: and Mr. Buffum used to say, "Oh! we get along very nicely on the whole."

Now he walked nearer the car. He liked to share another's keenness, though the object on which that keenness was lavished might be beyond his power to appreciate. Monnie's keenness was as wholehearted as his own, though a little differently directed.

He gently prodded the silently staring boy with, "It seems a very nice sort of car."

"Just right for you and me, Governor. Solid. No kicks and tricks. Roll you along safe as mother pushing baby in a pram. And get there, too. Mind *you*. Quicker nor that old bike of yourn. That easy, too."

Mr. Buffum smiled.

"I could never drive a motor-car, Monnie."

He spoke gently as one who states an imperishable fact.

"Aw. Don't talk so silly!" begged the boy, who perfectly understood Mr. Buffum's shyness of approach, as it resembled his own to certain subjects. "'Ere. Come on. You set aside me. I'll show yer."

Mr. Buffum was always a victim to the spell of another's enthusiasm. It gently tickled him with pleasure to be taken in hand and mothered by the small boy. Tight fingers gripped his coat sleeve, pulling.

"He really does want me in with him," he thought as he climbed in, "also itching to handle the magic thing and show off perhaps." Mr. Buffum watched the light come into the boy's face—where the light came from in a human being interested him far more than what the boy was saying—which his hearing quietly refused to convey to his brain—or whatever part of him turned words from ordered noise to something with meaning. Self-starter—gears—accelerator—throttle—clutch—all the queer jargon passed happily by while he watched this young human creature lighted up and almost trembling with passion to pass on information which should be useful to them both. Wherever had he learned it all?

"Now once more. See, you're in neutral. Press the self-starter." And Monnie pressed it firmly, so that the engine started and Mr. Buffum came to himself with a jump to expostulate:

"I say, Monnie, really. Miss Lucia—you know——"

"Push the clutch well out—this pedal, see: then get into bottom: then let off the brake, slowly let in the clutch, give her a leetle more gas, and off she moves."

And off they slowly moved for ten yards along the drive.

"Yes, but, Monnie——" faltered Mr. Buffum.

"Then down with the clutch," the boy persisted, deaf with excitement, "on with the brake and you stop and get into neutral and then into reverse and slowly back—see. Never a jerk—always slow and sure—feel your way sort of with feet and hands—you just want to get your nerve, like. Lumme, you and me, quiet-like up and down here."

They stopped again. The boy's face was glowing with excitement. Mr. Buffum enjoyed the sight of it as much as the sight of a prized gentian flowering.

"Here. Feel yer power over it—yerself," this passionate missionary of his gospel urged, seizing Mr. Buffum's hand. "Look. Press that down. Switch 'er off!—yerself!"

Mr. Buffum pressed. There was a click. A thrilling silence and stillness as the engine stopped. Mr. Buffum tingled and coloured under the boy's gleaming stare.

"Feel it? Eh? What?"

There certainly was something rather—well—surprising. It was the first time Mr. Buffum's hand had ever controlled machinery.

"And that's abso-bloomin-lutely nothing to when you first feel her start."

"I can quite believe it," Mr. Buffum agreed, preparing to get out.

But his arm was clutched. "You set 'ere: you just set 'ere." The boy was squeezing in front of him: and almost against his better nature Mr. Buffum found

himself where he had never before dreamed of sitting—in the driver's seat.

The infection of Monnie's excitement tingled through him like an electric current.

"Oh, I say, you know, we oughtn't——" he stammered, like one little culprit to another.

"Clutch—see—push it well down—disconnects engine part and wheel part—gear in bottom—firmly—so—other foot on that little pedal—press it gently as you let in the clutch—that's lifting the left foot—there now we should be off. Now down with the clutch pedal again—into neutral . . ."

Mr. Buffum tried to shake off the electric intensity of the boy's frantic enthusiasm by his usual method of observing its effect upon the boy's face and bearing. But the actual touch and manipulation of the magic toy's wonderful appliances distracted and thrilled him. His usual command was in abeyance. Something was beginning to move—down a hill—and when his hand was seized and pressed against the self-starter—that something was fairly off—down a hill, too, that was no mere gradual slope. He was in the driver's seat, and the engine was purring away: his body tingling with its slight perpetual throb. He could no longer expostulate or resist.

"Down with the clutch—good—now into bottom—now gently on the accelerator—right foot."

The engine roared at his touch. Mr. Buffum's eyes blazed with excitement, he trembled all over his body, tense and thrilling, nearly shouting . . .

"Not too much—now gently up with the left foot—gently down with the right.

"And she moves! Lumme! She moves."

Mr. Buffum was too excited to hear the shout of the ecstatic boy as the car moved away under his guidance. Monnie's excitement was a childish thing compared with Mr. Buffum's fifty-years-old thrill at thus being for the first time in touch with what to him was sheer magic.

The amazing thing was indubitably moving.

In sheer blind excitement he leaned ecstatically forward, pressing the accelerator on the floor-board. The car roared forward—every nerve in Mr. Buffum's body sang in mad glee, like a taut bow-string thrummed—nothing mattered at all in his drunken fury.

Straight bang off the gravel drive on to the grass into a tall, slim may tree—his right knee was hit by a shouting boy—sudden stillness—the engine stopped and the car——

"Good Heavens!" said Mr. Buffum devoutly. "Where's the may tree? It was a red one."

"Here—let me back out of this—'fore anyone sees us."

But it was too late.

Lucia had come out. She was furious. She saw her whole plan frustrated. Her uncle's face showed the shock he must be feeling.

"You utter little idiot!" she said to Monnie, quite beside herself. "You've spoilt the whole thing. How dare you meddle?"

He was climbing miserably out of the car. She put an angry hand on his shoulder and shook him.

"Put him off it now for ever, you little idiot!"

Mr. Buffum came round to observe a small boy moving off, crumpled and dejected, a woebegone figure, fists rubbing eyes.

"It was my fault, Lucia," he said.

"Come in to breakfast and let the little meddling ass go home. I'd planned it all so carefully, too. Why are you so soft with that little idiot! Enough to terrify anyone. May as well back her out. Lucky you're not killed—and the car smashed—and your favourite may tree. Oh, I could *beat* him! . . ."

Mr. Buffum got guiltily out and inspected, when the car reversed on to the drive, the may tree. He announced cheerfully to mollify her: "It was only bent, dear: not damaged. I am so very sorry. It was really my fault, you know. I somehow got led astray by Monnie. I shouldn't have been. But I was so interested watching his face that I forgot what we were doing."

"I'll wash his face for him, the meddlesome little brat! You must be shaken to pieces."

Mr. Buffum was torn in two: he wanted to conciliate the angry, disappointed Lucia, and he wanted to make his fellow-culprit, a drooping figure pricked out in the distance by the straight tree-trunk against which he crouched to hide, straighten up again like the bent hawthorn, which was his red one. He disliked angry disappointment: he disliked, more, tears in a keen small boy—a shilling might help the one—her breakfast the other. So he took Lucia's hand, and, patting it, suggested that he would join her shortly in the dining-room,





"She put an angry hand on his shoulder and shook him. 'Put him off it now for ever, you little idiot!'"

as really that small boy must not remain bent like that. "When it was mostly my fault."

He brightened on the way to the boy to notice the shilling he pulled out of his trouser pocket was a new one. A new shilling was surely a panacea for small boys' troubles.

But the shilling, for all its newness, and the kindly diffidence of its offering, was bluntly, rudely, sobbily rejected.

"Don't want no shilling!"

It actually seemed to make the trouble worse.

Through fists and sobs and sniffs, Mr. Buffum made out:

"Put-yer-orf-it. Meant-it-for-ours-and-all-and-now-it's-never-to-be."

But he was too upset to be able to give the words any definite meaning: and too intent on soothing the boy's unhappiness to mind not understanding:

"Oh no, I'm sure she didn't mean it. We might have smashed her car, you know. We oughtn't to have meddled with it. But no damage is done. It's all right."

He found himself suddenly confronted not by the crumpled weeping boy but by the alert imp of keenness whose tear-stained cheeks were curious relics of a long-gone woe—and the keenness seemed to have gained in tensity as he said:

"You will have another go then, Governor?"

"Never. Never without permission!"

"Permission!" The startling imp yelled. And he ran off waving his arms, not so much to get somewhere as to work off something.

Mr. Buffum was too engrossed by the sudden completeness of the boy's change of mood to trouble his mind about its cause. He walked into the house to face angry disappointment—softened, he hoped with a smile, by coffee and rashers and toast.

There was the news, too, that the dear child wanted to break to him. It was foolish of course, to put off the moment of hearing the change. It was sweet of her to want to tell him. Selfish, of course, really to want her to remain exactly as she was, though very natural—very natural.

He began by telling her of Monnie's sudden leap from misery to joy and the effect the word "permission" seemed to produce.

"Of course *he* couldn't ask you to let us have another go—I think his words were—but that's where extreme age scores. I can. He would so love it. Really his passion for those things is extraordinary."

He went quietly on, and to his amazement the sullenness on Niece Lucia's face gave way to a look of amused delight which seemed to spread and deepen. Almost as if, were she a small boy, she too would have rushed off, waving her arms.

"Yes: I think . . . I think perhaps you might," she said as though it were difficult to speak.

"I was sure you couldn't remain so very angry with him!"

"Oh, I'm not so sure of that!" she said, and proceeded to hug Mr. Buffum, a proceeding he always found most satisfactory and for which he could never find an adequate reason. In this instance, however, it was quite explicable: the sort of overflow which would herald, as it were, from a dear impulsive girl the news he now leaned back to hear, and helped to educe by saying with a smile in a voice of sympathy.

"Now then, you tell me, dear . . ."

Mr. Buffum blinked, to find a bright surprised eye scrutinising him, and to hear her at last bring out: "You are the dearest most unsuspecting lamb!"

He was baffled to know what another sort of lamb might be supposed to suspect, but he did not worry about it: the main thing was that Niece was no longer angry or disappointed. So he quietly remarked:

"I don't know why, but I thought you were going to announce your engagement to me."

"Oh yes! Of course, there's nothing else could really gladden a nice girl's heart, is there?"

Mr. Buffum rose, much relieved, but scenting argument on lines which would all too swiftly lead him far out of his elderly, old-fashioned depth. About to suggest a stroll round the garden, he was interrupted:

"Look here! I've an article to finish. Will you take me for a walk in the woods about twelve, before lunch?"

He smiled agreement: she rose and, brushing crumbs from her skirt, she very casually went on: "You might perhaps cheer poor Monnie up a bit. He can't do that old bus any harm if you're there. I'm awfully sorry I snapped his head off."

"You are a very dear girl!" said Mr. Buffum, delighting in every sign of Eton-cropped, cigarette-smoking, very modern Niece's thought for others. Nothing mattered compared with this quite fundamental kindliness; that he could perfectly

understand: much, he owned, he could not understand, as for instance at that very moment why she should seem to be so deeply amused.

"She's playing some trick on me!" he thought to himself. "She's playing some trick on me!" and couldn't for the life of him think what the trick could be as he went out happily to call Monnie, who again appeared from nowhere directly Mr. Buffum's foot touched the gravel of the drive by the car.

The car seemed to emit a strange fascination in which Mr. Buffum was caught before he was aware of it directly he stepped within a certain radius. A sort of trembly excitement came over him. He was immediately clay in the hands of Monnie, who did not even deign to answer his stammered plea, "Oh, not me! Drive, Monnie. Not me!"

And there he was once more in the driver's seat, listening to tensely spoken words of instruction, thrilling to the throb of the started engine—but this time with a growing sense of what control of this marvellous toy meant.

Mr. Buffum became lost to everything: his mind was riveted to words which gained meaning and on instruments and appliances which responded to his touch of foot and hand. He was in a new world, moving slowly down the drive; backing jerkily up the drive, then at last almost smoothly: forward down the drive—stop—backward up the drive, and a sense of control over the wonder-thing grew within him, of a new confidence in himself as he obeyed Monnie's injunctions to stop, and heard—oh, joy!—Monnie's occasional, so sincere, words of praise, as when he got without a sound into second.

He came to himself at last sufficiently to gasp:

"I say, are you sure we're doing Miss Lucia's car no harm?" To which Monnie sternly replied:

"Did she or didn't she say we might? And look there!"

He turned to see Niece's beaming face through the hedge. She came forward with sudden demureness.

The two sat guiltily still under the owner's eye.

"It's lunch-time," she said. "I went my walk alone."

"Lunch-time! My dear! I *am* sorry."

Monnie stopped the engine and got out, followed by a repentant, apologetic culprit, who still shook with excitement, flushed.

"I had no idea!"

Monnie looked sullen but unrepentant. Such a morning was worth a lot in his young mind. Good enough, he thought so obstinately that he was less able to take in the next astounding words than he would otherwise have been.

"I'd *so* set my heart on you driving a car. I got it for a mere song. It's a present from me."

Nor could Mr. Buffum. Like Monnie, he stupidly gaped, the pair of them speechless.

"I don't quite understand," said Mr. Buffum feebly.

Monnie recovered more quickly.

"It's ours, Governor. Ours." He shouted and thumped the arm of Mr. Buffum hard, as though to beat the intelligence into him.

"But people don't—girls, I mean, shouldn't . . ." Mr. Buffum stammered. "And I could never really drive a car, you know," he added parrot-like, from force of long habit.

"Don't talk so silly!" the boy shouted and thumped. "You can blinkin' well drive one now!"

"Well . . . of course, I don't know . . . I never heard of such a . . . So this was it? The mischief . . . really . . . I suppose . . .?"

"Lunch is on the table, sir," called the clear, kind voice of Eliza.

And that was how Mr. Buffum was lured into motoring by Niece Lucia, helped by luck and Monnie, the car-bitten young maniac.

GOLFING GRAMMAR.

HE cannot beat me, although he did.
I'm better than him, and he knows it too.
In golf, not grammar, I'm interested—
Change "him" to "he" if it pleases you.
But he cannot beat me (although he did),
For I'm better than him, and he knows it too.

JOHN R. WILSON.

A POLITICAL PORTFOLIO

PORTRAITS WITHOUT PREJUDICE

By ST. JOHN ADCOCK

CARICATURES BY RAPHAEL NELSON

IF we are to believe the people who talk as if they knew, there are no great men nowadays—no great poets, painters, novelists, warriors, preachers, orators, and particularly no great politicians. There used to be great men in the past; even the Victorian era toward which we usually adopt a supercilious attitude, is allowed to have possessed several; but they have all died out at last and become, with the dodo and the ichthyosaurus, an extinct species. That, anyhow, is what we are told by impressive persons who presumably watch this world of mortals as astronomers watch the heavens, and write newspaper articles and books to let us know what things are looking like.

Of course, we are not bound to believe them; personally, I hardly ever do. They supply us with all kinds of other information, about the falling birth-rate, the exhaustion of our coal supply, the decay of industries, that the sun is growing cold, that the earth cannot last more than another million years, and so forth; and we blindly put our trust in them, to save trouble, until a fresh impressive person rises to prove conclusively that they are all wrong; then you have to root out your beliefs and start trying to find some new ones. But I have left off doing this; it is too unsettling. If mistakes must be made, I prefer to make my own; it is more amusing, and I have found, by experience, that I can do it.

So, without disturbing the expert statisticians who are busy weighing and measuring mankind in other spheres, let us survey the modern political world for ourselves and impartially assess a few samples of its chief inhabitants. We shall find them very different from the race which formerly inhabited that world, and whether they seem greater or smaller will depend on what happens to be our idea of greatness, and whether we decide that those great ones of old were actually giants among giants, or only Tritons among minnows. You have to remember that when the towering politicians of last century began to loom large among their contemporaries education had not become general; half the country could neither read nor write. The half that could had been brought up, according to whether it was of pedigree or of mongrel breed, to a conventional recognition of its innate superiority or inferiority, as the case might be, and this simplified matters.

To be a politician then it was necessary, for a start, to have influential family connections who could manipulate the electoral machinery and put you into Parliament. When you were there, if you had been well educated, had plenty of self-assurance and could talk plausibly and fluently for an hour or so at a stretch, the rest, in view of the average capacity, was fairly easy. A great politician was, to a considerable extent, a man of good birth and great speeches. His speeches had to be great enough to electrify the unlettered multitude, and to intimidate the smaller multitude of readers by their portentousness and amazing verbosity; for the newspapers of the period reported them in full and there was a sort of greatness in their very length. Turn to

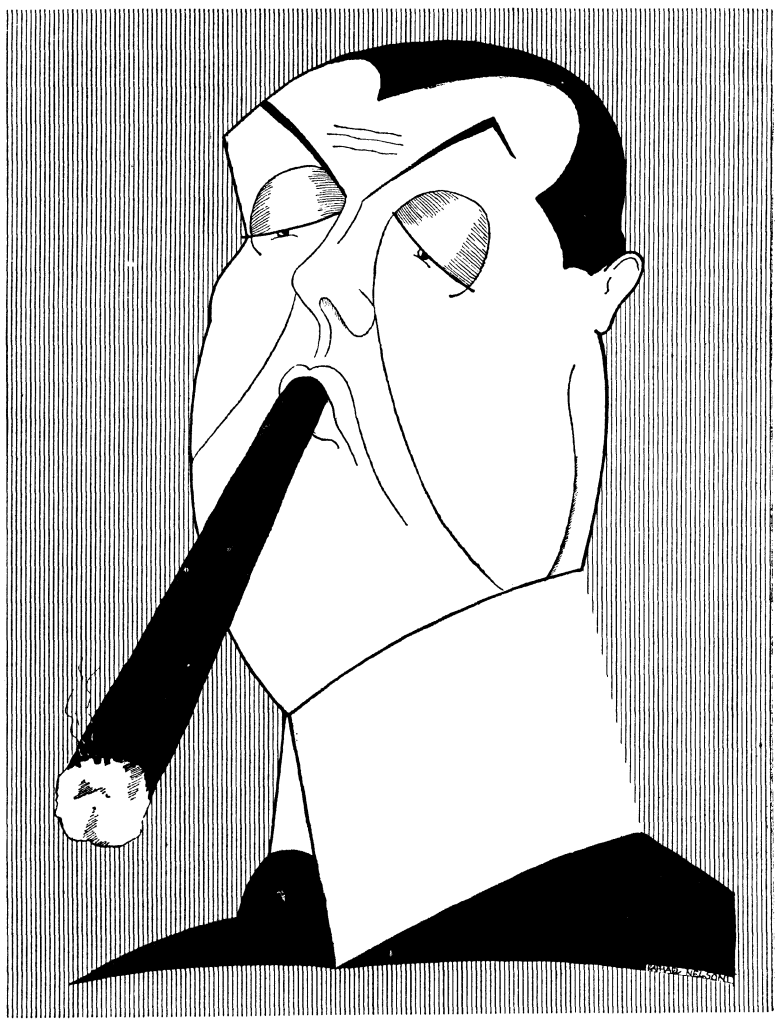
the stout volumes in which these speeches were republished and you will find that most of them are now deplorably garrulous, and unreadable. They depended for all their effectiveness on the manner in which they were delivered, and the politician who could utter them with success was reverently named a great orator. Old gentlemen will assure you with regret that we have no great orators to-day; that the art of oratory is dead. Well, having heard some when I was young, I am glad to hear it has passed away and hope it is safely buried and that nobody will be so inconsiderate as to disinter it. Those departed orators could certainly wake your enthusiasm and carry you away on a whirling torrent of words; but their appeal was to your prejudices and passions; they made no attempt to appeal to your reason, and probably did not credit you with having any. You went away from a meeting filled with admiration of the gifted being who could so sway your emotions, but when you tried to repeat the sensation by reading the report in next morning's paper it usually seemed nothing but dull, commonplace catch-penny garrulity, and you wondered what had been the matter with you the night before.



MR. STANLEY BALDWIN.

The fact is, the great political orator was a great actor. He was always playing a part. From his opening sentence to his rolling, rotund peroration he was not simply and sincerely doing his utmost to

convey useful and accurate information, but consciously playing for an effect. He stood on the platform as an actor on the stage, and, gesticulating abundantly, talked, not as one natural human creature to others, but as a trained performer to an audience who had come to be entertained and would not vote for him again (when they had votes) if his performance were not sufficiently entertaining.

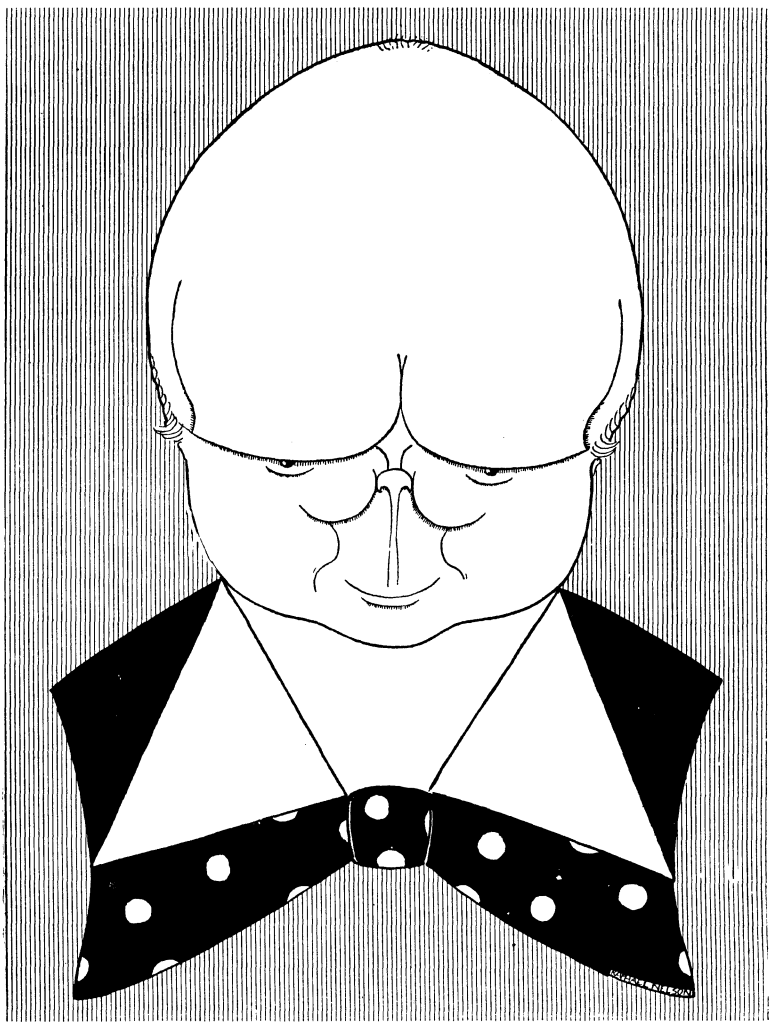


LORD BIRKENHEAD.

All that has changed. Politics no longer compete with the drama or the side-shows at a country fair, but have taken their proper place among practical serious business organisations. The great politician has ceased to be a great actor, a fine romantic figure; the more unsensational, matter-of-fact, efficient and businesslike he is the greater politician he becomes, by our sophisticated standards. He cannot content us by studying elocution and being beautifully eloquent; we expect him really to understand the country's social, economic, financial, industrial and other problems and to be able to demonstrate in words and in action that he is competent to deal with them. The people, as a whole, having acquired education and intelligence, estimate the size of their politician by what he gets done and not by what in magnificent oration he tells them he can do.

In these circumstances and according to our modern measures, I think we have politicians as great, and perhaps in some

ways greater, than those who coruscated showily before audiences less qualified to compete with them. For you have also to remember that nowadays our highest statesmen are much more intimately known to the man in the street than they used to be. And the man we know can never seem so remarkable as the man we don't know. because nobody knew what they were like at home. But now, the newspaper paragraphist, the interviewer, the cinema and wireless reveal all secrets and indifferently exhibit our most stupendous dignitaries bathing in the sea, playing rounders with their families, taking their children to the Zoo, dining with friends, feeding their



MR. WINSTON CHURCHILL

Mr. Baldwin is a modest person, but he could not maintain a dignified aloofness from the crowd, he could not make his public appearances with an air of processional importance, however much he wanted to. If he did, we should only take off our hats to hide our smiles in them. His predecessors could be stately or pompous public characters and nobody laughed, chickens in the back garden, their pigs on the farm, till their similarity to ourselves is borne in upon us and it becomes the more difficult for them to make their essential greatness manifest.

The twentieth-century statesman has to make headway against such disadvantages as these ; he has to prove himself somebody exceptional without the aid of oratorical

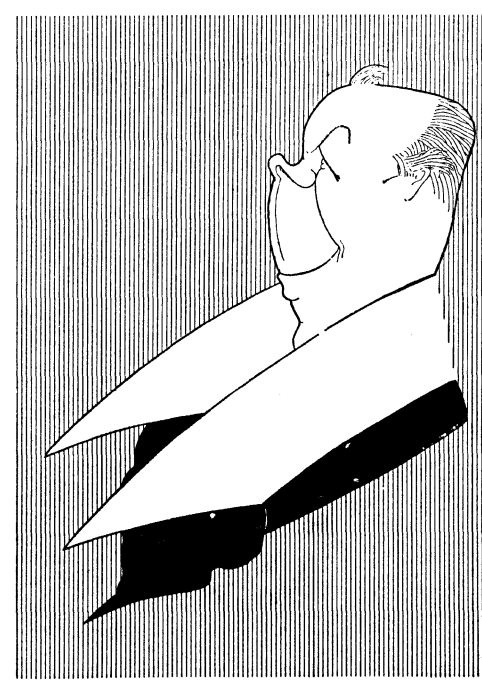
flourishes, assumptions of importance or inherited distinctions; and Stanley Baldwin has done that. It is significant of this new outlook, these national criterions, that when the Conservatives had to choose a new leader, though Lord Curzon had all the old-fashioned attributes of the great politician in excess, Baldwin was preferred to him. Yet he is not an aristocrat, but comes of a hard-working business family, and is openly and rightly proud of his ancestry.

"I regard it as of the greatest value to myself," he declared in one of his speeches, "that during the formative years of my life, and during the ten-and-twenty years when I first started work in the world, I worked in close contact with all classes of people in this country and enjoyed, through no credit to myself, the goodwill which I had inherited from generations that have gone before me and left behind a name for honesty, fair play, right judgment and kindliness to those with whom they worked. Through that, whether I succeed or not, I believe I have an understanding of the mind of the people of the country which I could have gained in no other way."

His experience as a worker in his father's business gave him, he says, a knowledge and breadth of sympathy scarcely ever to be attained by one who has had "an exclusively political training." As, from his own methods, you would expect, he denounces the windy rhetoric of the great orator with unmistakable emphasis: "Rhetoric is meant to get the vote of a division, or at an election, but God help the man who tries to think on it!" From two eminent artists, who were his uncles, he learned, "in addition to the value of work, a complete indifference to all criticism, except that which combines the two essential gifts of sincerity and truth." Most of us go farther, and find it hard to think that any unfavourable criticism of ourselves is sincere, and harder to think that it is true. The same mentors taught Mr. Baldwin to "form my own standards of value, rather than to attribute brilliancy, as I am so often asked to do in London, to something that I know is in itself essentially second-rate." Which might have caused a crisis in the Cabinet, only all of them would assume that he meant one of the others and entirely agree with him.

Of course, his enemies insinuate that his homely simplicity is an affectation; that, like the politicians of the past, he is a born actor, but subtler than they were, for his pose is to pretend that he has none, and his constant adherence to the democratic pipe, in photographs and out of them, is part of it. Now and then, it is true, he laments the burden of politics and says he has no ambition and yearns to retire and dwell peacefully in rural surroundings and look after his pigs, but he is always contented to go back and look after his Cabinet as if that were nearly as good.

But if you have studied history you will have discovered that every politician wants to be Prime Minister until he is; then he feels sorry about it and wants to be something else. This is almost the only characteristic of the obsolete type of Premier that Mr. Baldwin perpetuates; otherwise, whatever his opponents may say (and I suppose I am one of them, for I don't share his politics;—I don't share anybody's, but have some of my own that are good enough for me), he is so far from having any pose that he is the most transparently natural and human leader any party ever possessed. He does not go around keeping his followers and everybody else in awe, with "an eye like Jove's to threaten or command"; he is great enough to assert his greatness without trying to look the part, or dressing for it. On platforms and in the House he talks as familiarly, easily, plainly as he

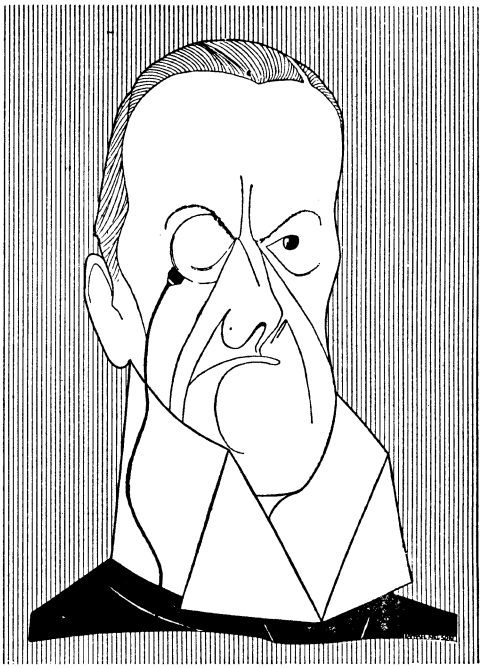


SIR WILLIAM JOYNSON-HICKS.

would talk to friends in his drawing-room. He does not keep one manner for private life and another for public, but is at all times spontaneously himself, so that his speeches—they can hardly be so pretentiously named—are excellent reading in print and, when he lights on a suitable subject, read like gossipy, sagacious, self-revealing, sometimes delightful, little essays, as if he found in politics the inspiration that such essayists as E. V. Lucas find in happier things.

Lord Birkenhead resembles Mr. Baldwin in not keeping one manner for private life and another for politics, but his is an entirely different manner, and occasionally more suitable for keeping private. Although a prosperous northern shipbuilding town is not really named after him, it probably would have been if it had not been built too soon. He was born there, and while still young came to London and, as F. E. Smith, made himself audible and famous in the law and in Parliament. Unlike Mr. Baldwin, he was ambitious; knew where he wanted to go and was determined to get there. He has got most of the way there and, with his keen intellect and brilliant debating and executive gifts, might have covered the rest of the ground if he had not been as courageously indiscreet as he is brilliant. Before the War he quixotically joined the Ulster die-hards in actively defying a law of the realm of which he did not approve, and I admire him for that. I feel like doing the same myself every time I receive preposterously extravagant demand notes from Income Tax collectors, but I lack his heroic spirit, and, besides, if I did break out there is no certainty that the Premier of the day would think it worth while making me Lord Chancellor in order to encourage me to uphold the law in future and see that everybody else did likewise.

Being very progressive, Lord Birkenhead lost no time in acquiring that particular habit to which average statesmen do not succumb until after they are actually Prime Ministers, and already he not only wants to retire but has done so. They say he is going into the City (where the "glittering prizes" are) and will devote himself to High Finance. With his going the political world will lose one of its wittiest, most independent, most provocative and caustically outspoken representatives, and the City will secure a "first-class brain," and a prospective Alderman whose coming should make the Corporation swell with pride.



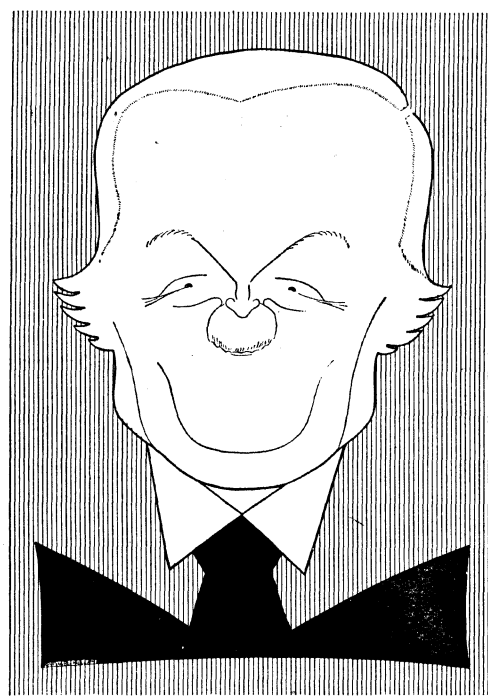
SIR AUSTEN CHAMBERLAIN.

He has merely exchanged the chance of becoming Premier for the chance of becoming Lord Mayor, which is not so important but looks more so, when he rides in procession in his gilded coach or walks in his robes behind the mace-bearer. And the position is not without positive advantages, for whoever else may not have a look in, the Lord Mayor is the one man in the country who is always sure of getting a Show.

There are streaks of Lord Birkenhead's irrepressible exuberance in Sir William Joynson-Hicks, but not enough of it to make him so unmanageable. He is rather a combination of the country squire and the Cockney, without being exactly either. Like Lord Birkenhead, he is a lawyer, and like all lawyers he appears to have an impression that he is entitled to be a law to himself. Every now and then, when the country squire in him loses control, he bursts into impish indiscretions, as when he created a sensation by selling a bottle of champagne by auction after hours in a night club. It was a harmless, even a benevolent indiscretion, since the sale was to raise money for a charity, but it was one of those things a Home Secretary is not supposed to do and therefore received a lot of troublesome publicity. In public addresses, too, he will express loud opinions

that are diametrically opposed to the policy of his leader, but either Mr. Baldwin takes him in hand and shows him the error of his ways or, without waiting for that, he alters his mind himself, for the sake of a change, and quickly simmers down and all is peace, and nobody is a penny the worse. He irritates everybody at intervals, but everybody likes him, and the fact that he is given a nickname, and such an innocuous and genial one as "Jix," puts the seal on his popularity.

Nobody has furnished Austen Chamberlain with a nickname—not that he is not liked, but he is too quiet, decorous, reticent, to tempt the public to be familiar with him. He was handicapped by having to enter politics as the son of a great father who revelled in the loud applause his son appears to shun. In common with the sons of nearly all great fathers, he has suffered from inevitable comparisons throughout his career. If he cultivated the sensational proclivities that are rampant in some of his colleagues, it might be obvious that he is at least their peer in political acumen and general ability; but, neglecting their example, he does not practise the art of self-advertisement and consequently remains more respected than notorious. While others have been dissipating their energies in dazzle and noise—by their fireworks ye shall know them!—he has gone plodding steadily on at his job, and, coming to solid facts, how many of them have done such real, unpretentious, useful work as he did at Geneva? He resembles his father superficially; chiefly in the eye-glass; but has not his father's dominating personality and gift of letting himself go. There is an air of reserve, a stiffness, a chilliness, about him that does not evoke enthusiasm; he can be charming in congenial company, but not deliberately and for the sake of making a favourable impression. His colleagues know he can be trusted not to conspire against them, for he has an idea that a gentleman should never be disloyal even to his friends; and though he has been in the House long enough to count as an old Parliamentary hand and must have learnt all the tricks of the game, he does not play any; which is probably what his critics mean when they say that, as a politician, he is no conjuror.



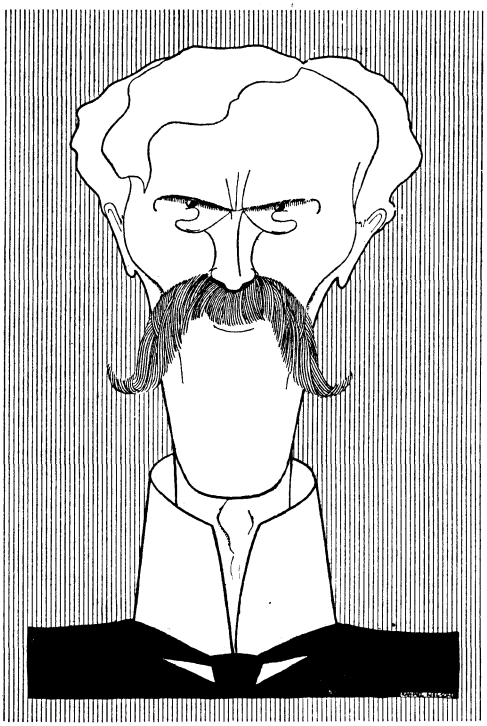
MR. LLOYD GEORGE.

The handicap that baulked Austen Chamberlain proved a stimulant to Winston Churchill; having no diffidence, but a self-confident and pugnacious temperament, he has gone ahead until, instead of being overshadowed, he has overshadowed the reputation of his father. But he is not merely a statesman; he is a veritable Admirable Crichton — novelist, painter, journalist, soldier, naval expert, historian, almost

> "A man so various that
> he seems to be
> Not one but all mankind's epitome,"

and whatever he does is done cleverly. Read *Savrola*, and you will recognise that as a novelist he was a potential best-seller; his paintings have been exhibited and praised by art critics; there are no more brilliant books about the War than the volumes of his history of "The World Crisis." He is so miscellaneously gifted that nobody quite knows where to have him. Novelists admire his journalism, journalists rank him as a politician, politicians think he would do better if he stuck to his painting, and what soldiers and sailors say of his battle tactics is unsuitable for printing. He is so attached to the limelight that if he passes out of it, it comes after him. When he was young, during the Boer War, he could not be taken prisoner without making a daring escape,

and could not pursue a flight over the lonely veldt without being persistently and grimly followed by an anticipatory vulture, which made him the hero of a lurid sensation in the papers. You gather from Lord Asquith's Memoirs that during the recent war Mr. Churchill confessed that he passionately preferred military to political glory and was eager that one of the high commands in the new Army should be conferred upon him instead of on half-pay Generals and other dug-out "mediocrities." He has such unbounded belief in himself that we humbler folk are half compelled to believe in him, and if he could only have concentrated on one of the numerous things he can do so well there is no saying to what height he might not have soared. His versatility is his chief stumbling-block, for in this country there is an ineradicable prejudice against the man who wears too many labels; and, one way and another, Winston Churchill is more protean than any of his contemporaries. Once upon a time he was the rising hope of the stern unbending Liberals, but after the last General Election he caught them bending and left them broken, and, in his irrepressible fashion, presently reappeared as a Tory Chancellor of the Exchequer. It is rumoured that certain of his new collaborators resent his triumphant intrusion, and would never consent to serve under him as Prime Minister; but the unexpected continually happens and has never happened to anyone more frequently than to him.



MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD.

Lloyd George and Winston Churchill have so much in common, it is not surprising that they used to be close friends. They are said to be so still, though since they have been on opposite sides they go about saying devastating things of each other on by-election platforms. They have a common affection for the limelight; they both practise the old-fashioned form of oratory, but with sparkling improvements and modifications; they are equally self-assured, and equally resolute in allowing nothing and nobody to stand in the way of a realisation of their ambitions. Churchill is the more versatile, but the less exuberant and emotional and much the less man-of-the-people. His witticisms and flowing perorations are more deliberately literary, his eloquence has a rotund solidity that is at times as impressive or as scathing but never so poetical and inspiring as his rival's. No politician living can so magnetise an audience, move it to tears or set it on fire with indignation or enthusiasm as can "the little Welsh wizard." And he has a wonderful and irresistible charm of manner to which Mr. Churchill makes no pretence. He can use language so magically and so subdue you with that personal charm of his that, though I have no politics, I have seen and heard enough of him to be pretty sure if he were to talk to me for half an hour he could hypnotise me into sharing any opinion he chose, until after I had shut the door between us. We are told that he is the man who won the War, and whether he did or not, there is no possible doubt that in that difficult time he rendered such services as leave us inestimably in his debt. While he was saving his country he lost most of his party, and has ever since been striving to collect its scattered members and put it together again. His amazing genius may prove equal even to this Herculean labour, but at present, from being the largest, it is the smallest party in the kingdom, and instead of filling a powerful position in the House as leader of a potent Opposition he gets less publicity

there than when press photographers find him working on his country farm, or opening bazaars, or giving away prizes and singing at Eisteddfods; and they say he has a very beautiful voice. Which reminds me that in one of his genial, casually personal addresses Mr. Baldwin mentions that Mr. Lloyd George is a member of the bardic circle, and adds, "He has told us—true it was in a peroration—that nearly two thousand years ago Suetonius Paulinus massacred, on the shores of Anglesea, a throng of priests and people while they were singing Welsh hymns." But, though he leaves it there, Mr. Baldwin is too kind to have meant that, in these matters, Paulinus was anything of a critic.

I can only select one last politician, as a sample of those Mr. Raphael Nelson has drawn. And none could be in sharper contrast, in most particulars, to the other six than Ramsay MacDonald. He has not Lloyd George's fluent, irresistible charm, nor Stanley Baldwin's urbanity, nor Birkenhead's cynical wit, nor Austen Chamberlain's ineffective personality, nor Joynson-Hicks's rashness, nor Winston Churchill's buoyant pushfulness and abounding versatility—though he is a very able journalist as well as a politician, a wide reader and master of an admirable literary style. If he is too reserved, cautious, self-centred ever to be roaringly popular, he has shown a dogged courage in championing unpopular causes, and has sound and reliable qualities that win the esteem of his opponents as well as of his friends. He is a socialist without being an inconoclast; a man of the people who respects tradition and national institutions, recognising that they are part of the nation's inheritance and not the exclusive property of any party. He leads a huge, motley crowd, and, if one may be forgiven the paradox, many of them refuse to follow him because he is too reasonable and logical to fly a red flag and attempt to obtain by force what he is perfectly aware can only be got and kept by the legislative operation of the will of the majority. He does not make the crude mistake of giving the word "worker" a limited meaning; as a writer himself he must be aware that, for instance, one may often have to work harder with the pen than with the pickaxe. His moderation alienates those fire-eaters who are as extreme and bigoted in their political creed as are the narrowest and most puritanical sects in religion. After all, the worst that those who object to his principles can say of him is that he is bent on righting what he considers wrong by converting a majority to his views; and the worst his defective followers can say is that he refuses to adopt methods of barbarism in order to give effect to the wishes of a minority.

Not writing as a partisan, but as a non-political outsider looking on, I think it fortunate that in these yeasty years the two largest parties in the country have such sane, level-headed, humane and responsible leaders as Mr. Baldwin and Mr. MacDonald. You may disagree entirely with either, but unless you are irresponsibly prejudiced you cannot but respect the goodwill and integrity of both, and if you measure them against the great politicians of the past, allowing for what they lose in apparent importance through our greater familiarity with them, and for all those disadvantages I outlined at the beginning, allowing, too, for the fact that the problems of war and peace they have had to deal with are vaster and more complex than any that perplexed their predecessors—you will, I fancy, decide that these two and other of our present-day statesmen may not be actually smaller than the freely belauded political giants of old, but may only look smaller because the general level of education and capacity in the multitude they govern is so much higher than it was.

At the same time, there are other forms of greatness, though you would not guess that if you noticed how great politicians, while they live, get more money than great poets get; and, when they die, more statues. London has no statue of Dickens or Thackeray; none of such born Londoners as Chaucer, Lamb, Keats, Blake; and I have lamented, in vain, that there is one of Sir Robert Peel in Cheapside, but none there of Shakespeare, who is for ever associated with that glorious Cheapside tavern, the *Mermaid*. The City fathers preferred Peel. Which only shows that Goldsmith wasted words in explaining

> "How small, of all that human hearts endure,
> That part which laws or kings can cause or cure,"

for, obviously, the politicians have convinced us to the contrary. So I am glad that, having an artistic conscience, Mr. Nelson has refrained in these pages from making them look more beautiful than they are. Not that I would give them less than their due—far from it. I draw the line at favourites, but shall always like to see all politicians get all they deserve—especially some of them.

GAMBLER'S HOPE

By J. J. Bell

"In yonder well lies treasure, ancient, rare,—
Rich gems,—a woman's hope, a man's despair."
ANON.

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

THE story is of these times, though its beginning was in those of Elizabeth of England and Philip of Spain. The thread of it, all but snapped in the spinning, while yet brief, on one of Scotland's Western islands, lost for centuries, tangled by time, in an ancient house of Toledo, comes out of the distance and darkness into the days of Edward VII.

We light upon it in London—a London as yet without taxis, picture houses, wireless, aeroplanes, night clubs, jazz; as yet without a Cenotaph. We pick it up, on an evening in September, in a corridor of the Central Grand Hotel, a railway hostelry magnificent to the eyes of Victorians, but monstrous to those of Georgians; for since its cathedral-like vestibule echoed to the tread of its first embarrassed guest, and its wine list included champagnes at half a guinea the quart, art has modified her ideas, while science has simplified nearly everything save life.

Here, then, for the story's sake, we must needs hold the thread a little while; but having witnessed the coming together of the two persons who shall be most with us in the pages that follow, we will let it go for the space of another generation; for of the two one is a child, and to tell of his upgrowing would make a book by itself.

Flora Ballantyre drew open the door and looked into the corridor, hesitated and glanced back at the man in evening dress holding her cloak—the man she had married three days ago.

"Stephen, there is a wee boy crying out there, all by himself."

Ere he could answer she was gone.

At a door on the other side of the corridor stood a boy of six or seven years, his small head very dark above his white night attire. He was sobbing not so loudly when Flora Ballantyre, gathering up her skirts, stepped out, but before she reached him he seemed to lose control. His small fists went up to beat frantically on the panel; his voice called desperately:

"Madre, Madre! Come, Madre!"

A chambermaid came quickly from the service-room midway down the corridor. For a moment her eyes were held in admiration of the tall, fair girl in the cornflower-blue silken gown; then they turned to the boy.

"Something must 'ave waked 'im, pore little chap," she said, in tones meant to be subdued. "When I looked into 'is room ten minutes ago, 'e was sound." She nodded at the closed door. "'Is mother was took ill—awful ill—ma'am—dressing for dinner—and now the governess is with her, and the doctor. . . . 'E doesn't know, pore little thing."

While she was speaking the boy had become quiet, his ear to the panel. Now,

as the hand of the bride—a hand smooth and shapely, but not small, with the tan of its native Highland air still upon it—alighted gently upon his shoulder, he broke out again.

"Madre, Madre! Come, Madre!"

Flora Ballantyre dropped upon her knees; her arm curved protectingly.

"Dear——"

The door was opened a few inches. The face of a woman, not young, pale, distressed, looked out.

"Luis, you must not make a noise," she said, and if her voice was stern, her eyes were full of pity. "You shall see Madre soon—very soon. Be a good boy and go back to bed and—and sleep till I come for you."

There was a little pause, and during it Flora Ballantyre had a glimpse of a part of the interior—a dressing-table, a bed, the back of a black-coated man seated on a straight chair, leaning forward in an attitude that struck her as dreadfully tense.

Then the boy, repeating his piteous cry, strove to force his way in.

"No, Luis! No, darling! Not now—not now! . . . Oh, madam," the governess looked appealingly at the girl, "forgive me, but if you would have the charity to keep him quiet—to take care of him—till. . ."

The bride held out both her arms to the struggling lithe body.

"Luis, will you come with me and let me tell you a story about the fairies till your mother will be ready to see you?"

Long afterwards Luis told her that it was her voice, rather than her words, that had stayed him then. So different from the kindly chambermaid's Cockney twang and the governess's high English intonation was its soft contralto, that, as he said, it first surprised him and then seemed to "smooth" his troubled heart before the words meant anything to his ears. But in his young manhood Luis was given to putting things prettily, and the likelihood is that it was simply the unfamiliar persuasive sound of her West Highland speech that caused him to turn his face to her. As he did so, the governess nearly blundered; she would have shut the door but for the girl's quick warning frown and whisper: "It will be no use unless you are letting him choose."

"Will you come, Luis? It will make me very happy if you will trust me. I will be very kind to you till you can come back to see your—your Madre."

He knuckled away the tears and looked at her. Her own eyes were not dry, but her sight was clear enough to inform her that of all beautiful child faces she had ever seen this boy's, despite the traces of weeping, was surely the most beautiful. There was pride in the small delicately moulded features, pride still innocent, and a sweetness of expression, though nothing girlish, on the pale olive countenance and about the parted red lips. The deep-brown lustrous eyes regarded her steadily, at first wonderingly, in the end graciously. Yet he hesitated and looked back at the door lingeringly, while the three women held their peace, the chambermaid with two fingers barring her mouth. There was a moment when it seemed that he would break out again, but it passed. With a sigh of resignation he turned again to Flora Ballantyre.

"I will come with you," he said, and, with a child's irrelevance, or what seemed like it, added: "You have blue eyes."

"Come then, dear," she answered, and nodded to the governess, who heaved a breath of relief and silently shut the door.

"This way, ma'am, if you please." The chambermaid went before them and into the next room, in which a shaded candle was burning, switched on the light and proceeded to smooth the pillows.

"I do not wish to lie down," said Luis, when Flora Ballantyre had lifted him into bed. "No!"—when the maid would have placed a chair—"she is to sit on the bed, like Madre."

"Yes, Luis; I will do whatever you tell me." Flora Ballantyre turned to the maid. "Will you, please, knock at No. 72 and tell my—husband—where I am—and why? Tell him I am afraid we cannot go out to-night, and ask him not to trouble about me. Tell him I am sorry."

The maid went out, and Luis said: "Sit right up on the bed—with your legs on it—close to me—like Madre." And when she had obeyed—"How old are you?"

"Oh, I am very, very old, Luis; nearly nineteen."

"Yes, that is old. Madre is just twelve. I allow her to be it."

"That is very kind of you, I'm sure!"

"Why do you say 'fery'?"

"Do I?"

"Yes, you do!"

She had always denied that the Highlander pronounces it "fery." She shaped

her lips and managed the word with a good hard "v."

"Yes, you said it right that time, but not the other times. I like you to say it wrong."

"Perhaps I do say it sometimes a very little like 'fery,'" she allowed.

"Are you not English?"

"No, indeed! I am Highland!"

"What is that?"

"The Highlanders live in Scotland, Luis."

"Then you are Scottish!"

leaned against her. "Do you think Madre will want me soon?"

"Yes, dear." Her arm supported him.

"Put it all round me," he said. . . . "Now, tell about the fairies. Have your fairies blue eyes?"

An hour passed. His comments on her stories became fewer and less critical; he yawned. Wisely she did not ask if he were sleepy; in her soft, slow voice she continued.

In the midst of a story he raised himself



"'Will you come, Luis? It will make me very happy if you will trust me.'"

She did not want to contradict him again. "The Highlanders are the very best people in Scotland."

"You said 'fery' that time—but never mind if you can't help it. What is your name?"

"Flora Ballantyre."

"Is that all?"

"It is my married name, Luis. Before I was married, I was Flora Maclean."

"It's an awful little name. Mine is Luis Francesco Ruy Salazar de Lara. I am an English boy. Madre is English." He up, clinging to her neck, and gazed drowsily into her face.

"What did you say your name was?"

"Flora."

"Flora," he echoed thoughtfully.

"It is an old-fashioned name. Perhaps you do not like it, Luis."

"I like it—yes; but I think I will call you Lady."

"But I am not Lady—I am only Mistress Flora Ballantyre."

He did not understand, nor care. "I will call you Lady, just Lady." A pause.

"You have got blue eyes—blue like your dress."

"Not so pretty as that, dear." She smiled, with a lump in her throat.

"Blue eyes." He put his mouth to hers, then let himself sink back. "I think I love you, Lady." A pause. "Not like Madre—but I love you, too."

She laid her cheek to the dark hair, and waited. His hold of her relaxed. She smoothed the pillow once more and placed him comfortably upon it. For a time the long black lashes lay still on the olive skin; then, when she deemed him asleep, they lifted for an instant.

"Blue eyes," he murmured and, for the first time, smiled.

Later, sure that he slept, she made to move, for her limbs were cramped.

"Lady, do not go away."

But his voice was drowsy, and it may have been that her reassuring answer reached him as from far away. She reached out, turned off the light, and lay down beside him.

The chambermaid stole in. "I was watching your light," she whispered. "The gentleman would like to speak to you. Shall I tell 'im to come in?"

"Yes."

Stephen Ballantyre entered cautiously—a big man, with the smooth, grave countenance that used to be called "legal," not that he was of the Law. His hair had begun to turn grey. He brought a chair to the bedside, sat down and took his wife's hand.

"I am sorry our evening is spoiled, Stephen," she murmured.

"So am I, dear. It's good of you—there seems to be no one else. I've been inquiring. Is there nothing I can do? Anything you would like?"

She shook her head. "Have you heard anything? Is his mother any better?"

"I'm afraid it is very serious," he replied. "I've had a word with one of the doctors—there are two with her now, and a third has been called. It's sad to think of the poor woman being in a hotel, without friends, though she does not know anything about it. She has a sister in Cornwall. The governess has wired. She is an Englishwoman. Her husband, a Spaniard, is travelling somewhere in the wilds of South America. It may be months before they get in touch with him. So, you see, dearest, why I don't resent your deserting me."

She squeezed his hand. "What are you doing with yourself, Stephen?"

"Reading—smoking—maybe dreaming of our future."

"Would you not care to run out and see some of your political friends for an hour—just to show them that I have not made you change your politics?"

"You know very well, Flora, that I'd care for nothing of the sort." He smiled. "Politics on one's honeymoon! That's the most Hieland thing I've heard you suggest! No, I'm very well in our room across the way—and perhaps I ought not to risk disturbing that poor little soul with my talk, so I'll slip off now and look in again before long. Sure I can't get, or send, you anything?"

"Nothing, thank you, Stephen. What is the time?"

"Nearly ten. You might as well take a nap, if you can." There was a quilt at the foot of the bed, and he drew it over her. "It's none too warm for the time of year, and anxiety chills one." He stooped and kissed her, rose, and stood looking down at the boy.

"Kiss him too, Stephen. He's quite sound now," she whispered. "I have the idea that he has not much of a daddy."

The man bent down and touched his lips to the childish forehead. The evening was no disappointment to him. Rather had its sad event been the means of removing his chief fear of the future—that Flora would not care for children. For he had never seen her take any particular interest in the children of the small Highland town where her father was agent of one of the Scottish banks, and where he had first met her while on a political tour with the Member for the district. But now . . .

He kissed his wife again and went out as from a holy place. . . .

In the soft luminance of the night-light, propped on her elbow, she lay watching Luis. Oh, beautiful little face! That was the thought paramount just then—oh, beautiful little face!—and we may wonder whether it was the childish beauty rather than the child that had stirred her pity and moved her to tenderness. Yet surely the first sight of the lone, little, white figure at the closed door had been as a distress signal to her heart ere ever the dark eyes had looked into her own; and before the night was over her heart was to ache for this child as it would not ache again till three-and-twenty years, not all so happy, had been added to her eighteen.

Nevertheless it was not without signifi-



"'Kiss him too, Stephen. He's quite sound now,' she whispered. 'I have the idea that he has not much of a daddy.'"

cance that the kiss had been his, not hers; that she had not cuddled the lithe young body till he had asked her to "put it all round" him. A girl's diffidence with a strange child? Conceivable; and we may by that explain Flora Ballantyre as she was then; but as the tale goes forward, we shall begin to suspect within her a something that stays her from letting herself go, and when it closes we shall have learned that only twice in its course did she give as much as she might. In her life are three great moments, the first at hand, the second and third still far away, and since because of the first Luis will love her always and forgive her everything, our judgment need not be less just if we remember it through all that is to follow.

At eleven, the chambermaid, about to go off duty, crept in with a tea-tray. Ballantyre followed.

Slumber had come upon Flora. We may imagine her drooping by degrees till her head reached the pillow, her hand slipping under her cheek. There she lay, breathing softly, evenly, her fair face looking not so much older than the dark one so near it.

Ballantyre gave a sign and the maid, setting down the tray on the bedside table, went out. He stood awhile, watching the sleepers and thanking God, before he retired. He returned, however, every half-hour till two in the morning, about which time sleep overtook him in his easy-chair.

The night-light died. Dawn was spying round the edges of the opaque blue blinds when Flora Ballantyre came to herself with a start.

"Madam!"

The governess, grey-faced, hollow-eyed, stood by the bed, shaking as with cold.

The question failed at the girl's lips, answered by the sight of the woman.

The girl sat up, astare, white with apprehension.

Slowly the eyes of both moved to the boy, lingered, and slowly came back to meet again.

"Could he not have seen her?" at last whispered the girl.

Her lips pressed together, the woman shook her head almost violently. The girl shuddered. Then the woman, as though terrified by her own silence, began to dribble out details.

"About four o'clock . . . quite peaceful at the end . . . but no use disturbing you . . . nurse there now . . . all so beautiful——"

"Oh, be quiet! What can all that be mattering now? . . . How will you be telling him?"

"His aunt cannot arrive for hours and hours," said the governess, as one evading a question.

"Well, I am asking you, you poor soul, how you will be telling him?"

The poor soul, all unnerved, worn out, brought her face close to the girl's; her fingers writhed together.

"Madam—oh, madam, could you . . . would you? . . . There is nobody else and —God help me—I *can't!*" And she sank to the floor and, with her face on the bed, fell to sobbing so grievously that the room seemed shaken.

"Oh, please—please go away somewhere," pleaded the girl. "You will waken him long before he need be knowing anything."

Even as she spoke Luis stirred.

"Madre!" he said sleepily.

She patted his shoulder lightly, reassuringly. "It is all right, dear," she said huskily. "Go to sleep again and——"

"Madre! . . . I want Madre!" He was waking. The governess had stifled her sobs, but he seemed to sense the unnatural thing. "Madre!" It was a loud cry.

The girl sat with her hands held helplessly before her, but when, the panic taking him, he struggled, screaming, from the bedclothes, it was given to her to act. She caught him to her young bosom, saying bravely:

"Luis, I am with you. Dear, Lady is with you. Look! Has not she the blue eyes?"

For the moment he was calmed.

Over her shoulder she muttered to the quaking woman: "Go—leave him to me —but tell my husband in No. 72."

In that dreadful hour, in the long, drear period that followed, Flora Ballantyre, girl in her 'teens, bride of three days, did truly give all she had to give; her spirit rose to a height that it would scarce reach again, not even for the sake of the son who was to be born to her. And when at length, on the arrival of his aunt, the little stranger boy's clasp had to be forced from her neck, she fell into her husband's arms and lay as one dead. . . .

Thus on our little prologue the curtain falls.

II.

It is the moments, not the years, that make or break us. The second is the seed

of the century. Life goes, as it comes, in a breath; ultimately each vital human judgment is made between strokes of the heart; we save, or doom, ourselves in a pulse's beat.

Though she would not, when it came, recognise it as such, the second great moment of Flora Ballantyre's life was at hand, and it was to be one of decision. The first had been one of sacrifice; the last, not now far distant, was to be one of revelation.

As the seasons of life are reckoned nowadays, Flora Ballantyre was in her summer. In one respect, at least, Time had brought to her more than he had taken away. At eighteen she had been a lovely girl; at one-and-forty she was a beautiful woman. Men other than Luis de Lara, who was prejudiced, men younger, as well as older, than he, deemed her beautiful, while women, with the critical regard they reserve for beautiful women, confessed her beauty by finding the flaws in it. She protested lightly that she was acquiring flesh and wrinkles: but there is grace that is not girlish; there are lines worth looking for. She declared she was getting old, yet accepted and displayed the day's perilously youthful fashions as though they had been decreed and designed by herself, and privily admired her own rose-leaf skin before dusting it grudgingly with unscented powder. Perhaps it was something in her healthy Highland blood that made her scorn the blooms of Bond Street and the balms of Rue de la Paix; perhaps it was only a simple conceit of her natural complexion; at all events, the mask she showed to the world was the face that life had given her, whatever secrets life had trained it to hide. In but one other instance did she flout the mode of the majority: defying the milliners, she kept her pale gold fortune of hair from the steel of the hairdresser, not because, as she said, she feared to look a manly matron, but because without it she would miss her maid's nightly hymn of praise. "Convenience!"—she had laughed at Luis when by that word he had sought to explain the epidemic of shearing in its early stages—"Women don't do such things to themselves for convenience, though they may find it convenient afterwards. The word you are looking for is Convention."

For seven years she had been a widow. Stephen Ballantyre, a wealthy man by inheritance, had about half-way through his married life abandoned business for politics. Flora, then nearing thirty, proved herself a real helpmate on the social side, exceeding his highest hopes of her as a clever hostess. Her enthusiasm for his political principles was as false and kindly as it was genuine and practical for the dinner parties and receptions; and the boredom she endured of many of her guests, particularly of the partisan women, was compensated by the knowledge that her entertainments were notable successes. And when Stephen, in his third bye-election, was returned by a majority of sixteen, he was fain to declare himself M.P. by the grace of Flora, rather than by the efforts of himself and all his supporters. Before long, for services to his party, he was awarded a Knighthood, thereby being confirmed the title given to Flora Ballantyre by a little boy, in the darkest hour of his young life, thirteen years before.

Four years later, Stephen died of pneumonia induced by a chill caught at a village political meeting in midwinter, a meeting which few people had seemed particularly to want, and which fewer attended, and his memory is that of an honest man who meant well by his country, loved his wife and son, and left them abundantly provided for. Such had been his confidence, inspired by her handling of certain affairs during his years in Parliament, in Flora as a level-headed, business-like woman, that she found herself in control of everything till her boy, then fifteen, should reach his majority. Despite the difference in ages, it had been a happy marriage, as are most marriages wherein the main interest is mutual, and the shares of the day's work, however separate, are performed cheerfully; yet we may suspect that this woman, the grief of parting dulled down, began to miss her duty more than the man to whom it had been done. That she did not, if only for occupation's sake, enter into a second marriage—and she had not a few offers—was a puzzle to her acquaintances. They were not to know, however, that in the first year of her widowhood she had discovered a distraction which became an occupation unwittingly indicated by her husband in his will—an occupation which for a long season was to be the paramount interest of her life, and afterwards its curse.

On this March afternoon, upon a terrace of the sun-bathed, rose-lovely garden at the rear of the Hotel Reina Cristina, Algeciras, we find Lady Ballantyre seated in talk with Luis de Lara, who, with the

weariness of a long railway journey in his mien, is regarding her for the first time after a separation of two years.

There is still something of the little boy in the eyes of Luis, though he is a man of thirty, with a man's experience of the world in peace and in war—still something hinting at dreams and ideals which have, somehow, survived the years. His face tells all his age, but there has been no coarsening of the features; rather, perhaps because of its leanness, it appears a little ascetic. He is fairly tall, but so neatly made, as it were, that standing alone he gives the impression of a medium height. Without suggesting athletics, his body and its movements are those of a man in excellent condition.

"But, Lady, why a telegram four days after your arrival? Why not one a few hours before? I should have been here to welcome you on your first visit to Spain. Was it that you did not remember until last night that I was in this country?"

"I had not forgotten, Luis, but my plans were made in a hurry. I had not intended to go so far abroad at this time; indeed, I had as good as decided to spend the spring in London; and then Steve got a letter from his Norwegian friend, of the Whaling Station over yonder, repeating an invitation given in Norway last year, and —well, here we are! I'm expecting Steve shortly—with a string of whales, no doubt!"

"Still, you know," said Luis, "I am feeling a bit hurt. In the past year your letters have been getting fewer and shorter, and now—this!" He made a small gesture of sorrowful reproach.

"I know I have been remiss," she admitted, "but not through forgetfulness or fickleness. The year has been rather a difficult one, in some ways."

"Tell me about it."

"Afterwards, perhaps. Tell me first about yourself, Señor." It was the nickname given him by his English schoolfellows, and she still used it in the lighter moments. "Are you now done with the troublesome details of your poor father's affairs? Your last letter told me they were somewhat involved."

"They still are," he answered quietly; "but now, I think, I know the worst."

"The worst!"

"Yes, Lady. Unexpectedly I find myself a poor man."

Lady Ballantyre was looking as though she had received a blow—as, indeed, she had. "But that is too dreadful," she murmured.

"Not too dreadful," he said, gravely amused. "As you know, I am alone in the world and not altogether incapable. And I have been feeling less vexed for myself since I received your telegram. Its news of your being here lifted me out of the worst hole a man can get into—himself."

She made an effort, and in her glance kindness took the place of dismay.

"Luis, I am most awfully sorry."

"Thank you. Your sympathy is none the less welcome for being expected. And now let us talk of something interesting."

"But what are you going to do about it?" she asked, ashamed of wondering what she, herself, was going to do. "I know you are not the sort of man to be beaten down by ill-fortune, but you have always been used to having lots of money——"

"I shall learn to do with little—in time. The lesson will be easier in Spain than it would be in England."

"You are not speaking of settling in Spain!"

"At the worst, I have a roof of my own here. There should always be a small income, and I have no friends here to help me to spend it. If I can make myself interested in the interminable mass of manuscripts, many unfinished, of my father, the time will pass——"

"Are not any of the manuscripts of value?"

"Not, I'm afraid, in terms of pesetas. They are the sort of things that sometimes get printed by enthusiastic antiquarian societies. Perhaps"—a small pleasant laugh —"I shall become an antiquarian myself one of these days, and have a try at completing the poor man's unfinished literary symphonies on the glories of ancient Spain."

"Nonsense, Luis!" she said a little sharply. "There is nothing, and never will be anything, of the recluse in you. You may as well tell me you are going into a monastery."

"I might even do that, Lady, were I a better man," he said, his gaze apparently on the blue bay and the Rock beyond. "But in the meantime——"

"I can't understand it," she broke in. "I know it's taking a liberty, a big liberty, but I think of you, not your father, and it seems incredible that the fortune of your father should have so suddenly disappeared."

"Still, the explanation is quite simple. Some years ago he was ill-advised and reinvested half his capital. It was lost. He did not worry much about these things, and went on living as usual, travelling about

as usual, dreaming as usual, and drawing on his remaining capital, as I was doing, without thinking about it. Yes, all quite simple! When the illness seized him in Brazil two years ago and I, who had not seen him for ten years, went out to bring him home, he had but the vaguest idea of his affairs; and afterwards, as the illness grew worse and the weariness increased, though I was much by his bedside, I never had the heart to trouble him. And I'm glad I didn't trouble him. He went out—it is just six months to-day—in the belief that he was leaving me fairly well off."

"Then, Luis," she said softly, "you forgave your father."

"The question of forgiveness did not arise—on either side. My father and I had never understood each other—that was all. Perhaps he never gave me the chance to understand him. I certainly never gave him the chance to understand me. It was, as you know, because of his treatment of my mother that I vowed that childish vow, never to meet him again, never to set foot on the soil of Spain. Yet, because he asked me, I dined with him in London in 1914, on the night before I went to France, and because of him I have been in Spain for two years. Vows made against one's own flesh and blood are pardonable only when they are broken. I do not love the memory of my mother the less because I have lost the bitter thought behind it. How my father, having adored her for a year or two, could have as good as forgotten her in his search after dead things, is a question quite beyond me. He was an enthusiast in research, and all enthusiasts are a little mad." Luis took out his cigarette-case. "May I? I would not offer you one of the things I smoke to-day."

"You may! It is years since a man asked my permission. The cigarette has ceased to be a sign of the English gentleman. You are a Spaniard, after all, Luis!"

He shook his head. "It is only that I am in Spain. Why, after two years, I still find myself in difficulties with the language!"

"All the same—but never mind!" She broke off and became serious again. "Tell me one thing, please. Did your father speak often of your mother?"

"Not once." He eyed the cigarette. "Only, one morning, when I went into his room, I found his secretary hanging an old portrait of her so that he could see it from where he lay."

"You were not hurt that he had not asked you to hang it?"

"Does it matter? He remembered at the last. I think he was sorry. If I had had anything personal to forgive, I should have forgiven him then."

Lady Ballantyre leaned forward. "Do you know, Luis," she said, rather shyly, "I think you have a very sweet character." Then she drew herself up. "I mean, you don't let things make you bitter."

The olive cheek darkened. "I thought you knew me better," he said, with gentle irony. "I was born with a solitary virtue."

"Tell me what it is," she said, once more self-contained, "lest I guess wrong."

"No. It is of no value unless you discover it and find a use for it. And that may be never."

At this moment a servant of the hotel brought Lady Ballantyre a telegram. She took it smartly from the tray, but hesitated a moment before opening it. Having read the message, she winced slightly, then regarded it till you would have fancied she was dreaming over it. Then, of a sudden, with a gesture she dismissed the servant. She was pale.

"Not bad news, is it, Lady?"

"Only a little worry from London. Let me forget about it." She replaced the message in the envelope. "Don't think me too curious," she said presently, "if I go back to your affairs. They are so much more interesting than my own. I seem to remember your telling me long ago of some wonderful treasures—pictures, furniture, books and so forth—in that ancient house of your father's and his ancestors. . . . Did you have to part with them?"

Luis' look was one of mild astonishment. "Part with them? Why?"

"Then—then——" The natural delicate colour came back and deepened—"they are still in your possession?"

"Certainly!"

There was a pause till she said: "Then their value must be a sentimental one?"

"Their value to me—yes! Of course they have also a money value. I don't see how I'm going to manage the premium in future, but at the moment they are insured for two million pesetas; that is about seventy thousand English pounds."

Lady Ballantyre drew in her breath. "Luis!" she exclaimed indignantly.

"What is it, Lady?"

"What did you mean by terrifying me by saying you were a poor man?"

"A poor man I am. A man is rich only when he can spend freely."

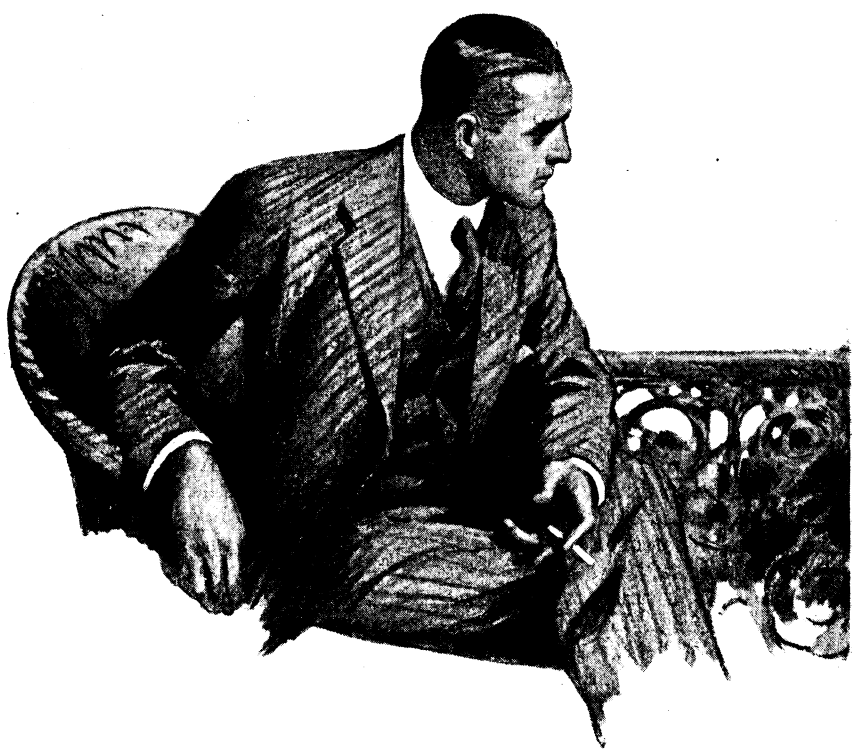
"But—great Heaven!—why starve, or as bad as starve, in the midst of plenty, especially when it is all your own? Such treasures are easily convertible—they would probably fetch far more than——"

"Ah, no!" he said quickly, and appeared to stiffen. "A de Lara would have to be hungry indeed before he took an heirloom to market. He might do it for those he loved, but surely not for himself—and I am alone, and the last of my line. Forgive me, Lady, but for just an instant you made me feel angry. Only you did not understand."

There was a baffled look in the blue eyes. "I told you, Luis, you were a Spaniard—yes, and now I call you a Spaniard of the Spaniards!"

as an English boy. All my friends are in England; my English mother rests there; all my interests are there. Until two years ago I had lived all my life in England, saving the years when I fought for England in France. Lady, you know all that as well as I do; nobody knows me as you know me; and you know that it was a little English boy you took in your kind arms, that sad night, three-and-twenty years ago. And though I have to live the rest of my life in Spain, it will make no difference."

She might have answered that he had spoken emotionally, sentimentally, as no Englishman in England would have spoken, but she refrained. Instead she turned it off by saying in the speech of her girlhood, which had lost something, but not all, of its native softness during the years in London:



"Except by birth, which may include one or two little failings," he replied, smiling, "I am an Englishman; and there are Englishmen who would feel about their family treasures just as I feel about mine." He waited for a rejoinder and added: "I was brought up and educated in England, and all the good-humoured chaff of schoolfellows could not forbid my belief in myself

"And once again, Luis, I will be reminding you that I am not English, but Highland, and that all your good words about England and the English are of no use to me! And, indeed, in some ways you are nearer to the Highlander than the Englishman, not that a Highlander would ever wish to be anything but what he is. That is not said to hurt you, dear Luis," she went on. "I

know why you would be English, but I am thinking you might be happier—and more fortunate perhaps—if you submitted to being what you are."

"It is well that I can laugh kindly at myself, for you have a way of making me do it," he said. "But tell me how you think I might be more fortunate."

"You must first tell me something. So far as I have noticed, you have never fallen seriously in love. Have you?"

His smile was half-tender, half-mocking. "I fell in love twenty-three years ago, and the blue eyes are as blue as ever."

Lady Ballantyre laughed, and waved her hand as though to direct attention to their lovely surroundings.

"Undoubtedly, Señor, you belong to this flowery land!" she remarked. "But let us be serious. The question I wish to ask you is so intimate that I'm almost afraid——"



"Lady Ballantyre regarded the message till you would have fancied she was dreaming over it."

"You can ask me any question in the world."

"Well, then—would you, Luis, marry a woman—a girl, I mean—not of your own religion?"

"No," he replied, but with some hesitation. "I do not think I could marry a woman not of my church."

"Which means that you would not leave your own church——"

"Not for any woman in the world."

She gave a little nod, as much as to say, "See how wise I am!"

"And whither, Lady," he inquired with a gravity which might have been assumed, "does the question lead?"

"To the other question of your future. Sooner or later you will want to marry."

"Shall I?"

"Luis, don't be flippant! You must marry, and you must marry a girl with money—after falling in love with her, of course."

"Of course!"

"Smoke another of your abominable Spanish cigarettes—how easily you seem to have acquired the taste!—and keep quiet, and listen! Your religion bars me from finding you a rich and charming English wife, so you must find a rich and charming one in Spain."

"Why 'must'?"

"Firstly, because you are the sort of man who requires someone to take care of him——"

"Why not someone to take care of?"

Her look was kind. "Yes; I shouldn't wonder," she said.

"And secondly?" he asked lightly.

"Secondly, and finally, because you must have money."

"I wonder why!"

"Well, for example, to pay for the insurance of your treasures." She drew a swift breath. Her glance was, one fears, a little furtive. She had brought the conversation back to the subject of her desire, and was wondering if she had done it skilfully enough, and how he would take it. "Suppose," she added with an effort, "suppose your house took fire, and they were all lost, and not insured, would you not be sorry?"

"For what—the loss of the treasures, or of their value?" He did not wait for her answer. "I should probably be annoyed for a day or two, and then accept the thing as an act of God. I am quite certain that I should not regret having omitted to get a rich girl to pay the premium, and the richest girl in the world could not restore my treasures, as you call them." He laughed shortly. "I think you are still misunderstanding me. I am not proud of the things, though I am too proud to sell them for my own benefit. But I might be proud of them, and not too proud to sell them, if, as I've already suggested, the sale would benefit someone I cared for. If, for instance, there could happen such an absurdity as your being in need, then I should say, 'Lady, all in my house is yours.' . . . Allow me!" He stooped and restored to her the telegram, which had fallen from her fingers.

She gave a nervous laugh and said: "Is not that what every Spanish gentleman says to the stranger who admires his household possessions?"

"Possibly; but on this occasion," he returned good-humouredly, "an English gentleman says it to a friend." For an instant he looked at her, then lit a cigarette.

It was as if unwittingly, in answer to her secret cry, he were making the next step easy for her; yet though she had advanced already so far, she could not take it. She had come all the way from England to seek his help; she had pictured him, first shocked at her disclosure, then eager to aid, if only because of the tears in her blue eyes. And it was she who had been staggered by his disclosure of the change in his fortunes, only to be steadied by the discovery that the "treasures" were still there. A moment or two ago, she had thought to hear herself say, softly, pathetically, the sentences rehearsed under cover of all that talk about marriage —"Be careful, Señor! What if I should take you at your word?" And now, after all, she could not say them; could not hold out her hand to this ready helper. Pride? Nay, hardly. . . . Flora Ballantyre might still, before the world, hold her blonde head as high as when a girl; yet in her dark heart was a woman's humiliation. She was ashamed of herself for having inveigled him—there was no milder word for it—into making, not an offer of money, but a confession of devotion. She was abashed and abased, not by his words, but by that last look of his wherein had been revealed—inadvertently, she did not doubt—the secret of his man's life. No longer could she lightly wave away, or impatiently evict, the thought which in the past had visited her not so seldom. Her suspicion was become her certain knowledge. By her own act she had caused the truth to be made manifest. Luis de Lara, whom she had mothered ere ever she knew motherhood, was in love with her, had been in love with her—she could see it clearly now—since his schoolboy days. He had exaggerated only a little when he said he had fallen in love three-and-twenty years ago. . . . Well, there was nothing absurd,

nothing unnatural in his being in love with her. Scarcely a dozen years between them —that was all. Yet, because she had once protected him, she had continued to think, or deceive herself into thinking of him, as always a boy. And now—was there—could there be—any sort of response in her heart? Not passion, of which her life had known nothing; to Stephen, her husband, she had given no more than a girl's liking and admiration, a woman's affection and respect; not passion, indeed, but something warmer than gratitude, tenderer than pity—was it possible to find that in her heart for Luis de Lara? Could she, in any measure of the word, love him?

Never before had she asked herself the question. In the lives of most of us are only a few people for whom we really care, year in, year out; and many years may pass without our realising how much we care; or, it may be that a darkness must fall ere illumination comes to us. Perhaps Flora Ballantyre was fated to find it so. In the latter period of her wifehood she had never paused to analyse her regard for the young soldier who came to her home as often as his leave permitted, without ever seeming to take his welcome for granted; in the early part of her widowhood there had been moments, as has been hinted, when she wondered as to the nature of his regard for her; but afterwards, in the fever of that secret excitement to which she had abandoned herself, a fever as carefully concealed as an ugly disease, so that her days were filled with dissemblings and paltry deceptions, she had become incapable of introspection and of seeking the truth in anywise.

Luis blew out the match. She had not answered her own question, though it may seem to have been a question that could have been answered, one way or the other, as soon as asked; but she thanked God that she had not betrayed her need. It is well to thank God, even prematurely, as did this poor lady, for surely God must pity us in the ironies of our own making.

"Well," she said, compelling the blue eyes to lift from the crumpled telegram, "I do not imagine that I shall ever ask you for your treasures, Luis, but I do thank you, all the same. And I hope that to keep them you will not, after all, have to live your life in Spain. What about the secretaryship you held in London till you were called away to your father, two years ago?"

He made a little gesture with the cigarette. "No good, Lady. The salary was a joke and I, without business training, got the post, just after the war, through a man's friendliness. I dare say those concerned were delighted when I left. Besides, I'm beginning to think that, after all, I had better forget, as far as I can, about—England."

"You must never put it that way, whatever happens," she said, perhaps more warmly than she intended. "Your room at Leinster Gardens will always be ready for you. But, in the meantime, tell me how long you can spend with us here."

"I can stay to dine, if you will ask me." he answered, smiling.

"What? You don't mean——?"

"I'm sorry, but I must take the night train. There is a meeting with the lawyers in the morning."

"Luis! Because of my wire you have taken that long, tiresome journey, knowing you would have only——"

"A glimpse of the blue eyes!" He laughed lightly. "And now you are going to give me an excellent dinner! Surely it is my lucky day!" He turned his head. "Ah, and here comes Steve, to make the little party complete!"

A further instalment of "Gambler's Hope" will appear in our next issue.



WODJABET

By C. E. Montague

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

Special interest attaches to this remarkable tale of the trenches, as it was the last story penned by the brilliant author and journalist whose recent death we all deplore.

TILL you come under enemy fire you can't tell how you will take it. There are quite a lot of ways. The first time that one man is just missed by a shell he will fly into a rage, as if a neighbour at Putney had thrown an old tin over the back-garden wall and all but broken the cucumber frame. Another fellow will perk up at once and be quite pleased with himself, as if the whole business were football and he had headed the shell out of goal. A third will simply and piously wish it were bedtime to-night and all well. A fourth—and this one is my friend McAvity—feels as if he had just won a bet.

James was the name that he had got at the font, but Wodjabet was what our whole platoon called him, because it was what he said more often than anything else. In his earliest youth he may have said, "What do you bet?" but he had since felt a call to say it so often, and always so eagerly and so fast, that it had run together a bit, as the young lawyer's "My lord" turns to "Mlud" with the growth of his practice. For James, in civil life, had been one of those men who can hardly come into a room without wanting to take you on about something or other—"Bet you there isn't fifty books in this room," "Wodjabet a fly lands on you sooner than me?"—all that sort of little fancy speculation.

As soon as we got to the front and he had been sniped and bombarded a little, it seemed to me that he looked better. I fancy the way of it was that every time a shell or a bomb or a bullet came near him he felt as if he had said to the German who sent it, "Wodjabet you'll hit me?" He had triumphantly taken the enemy on. As time went on and things kept missing him, he got to be bucked beyond words. He must have felt that he was a hell of a punter; with a star like his he'd break the bank at Potsdam yet. He went about with his eyes shining. He was the only man I ever knew that positively fretted to be out on guard in the trench. Resting in a good dug-out was mere lost time to him. It was as if frost had stopped all racing. Just like that. He pined.

If you feel that you can't make a bet but you'll win it, you'll never be able to get as many bets on as you want. And that was Wodjabet's trouble. Do what he might, Fritz couldn't send over as much stuff as Wodjabet needed to keep him quite sure that the winning sequence was still going strong. And so Wodjabet took it into his head to stimulate the supply, and that was all wrong.

I caught him at it myself. I was platoon-sergeant then, and very responsible. One night I was going my round of our platoon's sector of trench—one of the clear nights when you would see the rats on the edge of the parapet, up on their hind-legs, silhouetted black against a low moon, making love or war, I suppose, capering, anyhow. Wodjabet's post was just round a corner, so that I didn't see him till I was almost upon him. And he didn't notice me coming. He was too much taken up with this rotten game he was at. First he'd put up his arm

at full length and wave it about. The moon was setting just behind that bit of our line, so that Fritz must have seen Wodjabet's hand like a thing thrown black on a white screen. Of course Fritz took a shot—he didn't often get such a target in any quiet part of the line. Then Wodjabet's hand snapped its fingers and Wodjabet chuckled, all to himself as he thought, and lowered the hand for a rest. No doubt he felt as if he had cleaned out a bookie.

"What the hell are you after?" I asked, though I knew.

"I am not, Sergeant," said he. "It isn't the fact."

"What isn't the fact?" I said, though I guessed very well what he meant.

"That I was attemptin'," said he, "to sneak a cheap ticket to Blighty."

"Are you mad, then," said I, "not to know that there's only one thing will be said to a man that comes in off a guard with a hole in the flat of his hand and says it was Germans that made it?"

"Begob," said he, "I never thought of that." The man was downcast now, fit to kiss any rod that you'd take to him. If I'd fetched him a kick he'd have turned me the other posterior.

"Don't I know very well that you didn't?" said I. "Nor of winning the war and getting a look at the Rhine, nor of anything else in the world but this blithering passion you have for backing yourself to win nothing at all." I grew virtuous, I can tell you. I was the outraged father and all, as platoon-sergeants used to become in the War, unless they became proper robbers.

II.

THAT was the autumn of 1915. About the New Year I lost sight of McAvity and the rest for a time. A wound sent me to bed for a month at Versailles and thence to the Division's depôt at the base at Etaples, to convalesce on light duty before going back to my regular work.

At the depôt they gave me a fine choice of jobs, two being vacant—Provost-Sergeant and Sergeant in charge at the Officers' Mess. A head-waiter's life is a dignified thing, but a Provost's is an open-air job, with power to come in when it rains. Besides, crime has a charm for us all. So I turned policeman and said in my heart that people were going to see what a proper sleuth was.

I did, in fact, nab a French plasterer sneaking a sock that one of our cooks had hung out to dry on the roof of a tent. But that was pretty well my only real peep at the titanic strife between passion and eternal law. Most of the work of me and my powerful force of four men was heading thirsty brethren off the wet canteen till due hours and whacking the walls of tents with my stick after Lights Out to make ardent reinforcements stop talking and get down to sleep.

Still, I did have a guard-tent which was known as The Jug, like every respectable prison. And now and then I had some captive in it—nearly always a man awaiting trial for coming back a day late from his home leave, through meeting a friend at Waterloo Station. They used to tell me about it. You know the wise and merciful rule that a soldier under arrest must always be given an hour's outdoor exercise per day, under escort. I always took them out myself, and they told me in what good time they had left their homes and how they had reached Waterloo with an hour to spare, and how that friend had been on the platform and one thing had led to another till the train fairly gave them the slip—didn't even whistle.

I don't know why I liked those walks—possibly because it felt like being home again and giving a run to the dog. But the walk I liked best was the one I took, in the fullness of time, with McAvity. He had been home on leave, **like** the rest, and then——

From my Jug, at the edge of the depôt's gravelled parade-ground, I walked this long-lost son of my own through the small pine-wood north of the camp and out on to the high naked sand-hills beyond. It was March now; the sun had got a little strength; the white sands below on the flat miles of shore appeared dry; all the Channel looked brisk with little white crests to crisp little waves. England was somewhere north-west, but the distance was mist and the sea looked mighty extensive with all that little endless fretting of white. It was the sort of sight that makes you feel rather little and sad and left to yourself—the devil knows why: you may get the same feel from a great stretch of plough with a light fall of snow lying on it.

I made him sit down where we'd get all the sun and no wind. I gave him a gasper to smoke and left him to mellow a bit in the warmth before I said, "So the train bolted?"

"It did that," he said mournfully. "Like a colt. And I barely turning me back for an instant to speak to a very old friend."

"Oh! *He* was there all right?" I said. "At Waterloo?"

"He was, Sergeant." Wodjabet's face expressed deep surprise at my unaccountable knowledge.

"He always is," I said. "And so's the bar."

"And that's a true word, too," he said with conviction. "They'd have a right not to be keeping a bar in the place. I hear there are losings of trains in it daily."

He spoke just as simply and seriously as a child. And he acted like one, and a good one, most of the time. He told you the truth, he did what you bade him, he only went on the bend very seldom, he didn't shirk or grouse, he took things as they came, he was a good quiet trier. And yet he did it all as if he had some precious thing on his mind all the time and only went straight because he couldn't often be bothered to break rules or fall out with sergeants—it would get in the way of this darling old preoccupation of his. He looked like it, too: most of his face was like anyone else's; not his eyes, though; they would often go shiny and big of themselves when you were talking to him about any old thing, quite dull in itself. At these times they wouldn't be really looking at anything, either—anything outside him. I fancy they turned themselves in, when he got worked up, so that they'd see whatever it was that he had in his mind, and that was what made them shiny.

They looked dull enough now. "Can you give me an estimate, Sergeant," he asked, "of how much I'll be getting?"

"Were you drunk when arrested?"

"I'm not wholly clear about that. But it will be right on the crime-sheet. The corporal that took me looked a very truthful man."

"Did you hit him?" I asked.

"I'm not wholly sure. But he'll know."

"'Drunk and resisting,'" said I, "is twenty-eight days on the sands." I pointed to the wire-hedged prison camp on the desolate beach. It looked dismally sanitary. "Late back from leave is the same. About fifty-six days for the lot."

He almost shrieked. "Mother of God! I'll be losing eight weeks of the War!"

I stared at the man. You see, it was 1916. We were, most of us, far past the silly-fool stage of our soldiering. We didn't keep up the old gaff about liking the war. "There'd be bags of it left," I assured him, "if you were in jug for a year."

"Are ye positive, Sergeant," he asked very gravely, "the King and the Kaiser wouldn't be meeting in Holland or Spain, and taking a glass, and making a peace on us all before morning?"

"They would not," said I, "you ignorant fellow. Aren't they constitutional kings?"

"I'm exceedin'ly glad to hear that," he replied. "There'll be many sore hearts when the war will be over."

I hooted at that. "Do you mean there's a good many cooks at the base, and cashiers, and men that can't do with the sight of their wives?"

"Aye, and men that never knew the grand thing that life is till they were shot over. Like boys that had lived to be men and never seen porter or beer—only water. Me own life, for one, hadn't had a head on it ever before I got out to this war."

"You've got it badly," I said. I remembered about his complaint—how he was one of the cranks that don't feel the air is crawling with venomous muck when it whistles all round them: they just feel the nip has got into the whisky. "Well," I said, "there's hope for you, even in quod. Fritz has been bombing us here a bit, lately."

He brightened a little at that. But he was humble about his little indulgences. "Just to see a bit o' life," he pleaded. "Just to have a bit o' froth on it."

It was time to go back to The Jug. He got those fifty-six days.

III.

NOT for another four months did the doctors let me go back up the line. But I could pull strings at the depôt by then. So I wangled my way back to my own old platoon to act as supernumerary Sergeant till some other sergeant got done in. And one of the first men I saw when I got there was McAvity, still in one piece.

We went into the line the next evening, about east of Bully Grenay. The ground is all chalk in those parts, with a little wet clay like brown putty on top. I believe they put that whole lot of front underground later on, and every sentry kept guard in a sort of worm-cast, stuck up at the top of a shaft. But the time we were there we had only an old German trench with dug-outs that faced the wrong way, so that enemy shells would come in by the front door without having to knock. And that inconvenience wasn't the worst, either. Between

the platoon's two last sentry-posts on the left there was a fifty-yard bit of trench that was possessed with a devil. It looked a perfectly quiet, innocent place: Fritz's front line was a long three hundred yards off, a little way down the far side of a low ridge of ground. This ridge was our working horizon: from our trench ground sloped away up to it gently; beyond it we saw only sky and a big red moon rising.

A Jock sergeant from whom we took over gave us a wink and said that it was as good as a bargain with Fritz that nobody was to sneak up to the ridge on his belly and loose a shot over it. There were several places like that in the line—places absolutely made for swopping casualties: start swopping once and you would never be done. You don't want wear and tear for nothing unless you're McAvity or a fool Commander-in-Chief. So that bit of trench, like one or two others, had been pretty well out of the war for two years. It looked it too. No one had bothered to make a good job of it. For a good forty yards it was not three feet deep. And that part lay low, so it made a very good drain for the slope down from the ridge. On the day we went in it had rained pretty hard, and for quite thirty yards the trench was brimful of water. If you kept to the trench in going along to our last left-flank post, you had to wade up to your hips and the rest of you stuck up clear into the air.

I thought that post would make a pretty little bit of oddity for Wodjabet. So I took him along to relieve the outgoing Jock. The Jock platoon-sergeant was with us, and when we came to the water-logged part of the trench he said, "It'll no kill a man to be wet to the guts, but it does him nae gude," and he got out of the trench and walked along the parapet, bolt upright. Well, I thought, *he* ought to know, so I did as he did and let McAvity do it. And when we had changed the sentries the two Jocks and I did the same thing coming back. Peace, perfect peace, I thought to myself.

It wasn't long after midsummer then, and McAvity's two-hour turn upon guard had started at two in the morning. So the air had only just begun getting grey when I came along with the man due to relieve him. We went the dry way, as before, and it was all right. It took me a bit of a time to show the new man the lie of the land, and the shelf for his bombs, and this thing and that. The sky was whitening fast all the while, and a pretty thin twilight was all that was left when I and McAvity set out for home.

"Is it swim the canal," he asked, "or keep to the tow-path?"

I knew it was the sin of sins to be walking about on the top of the earth for one's bodily comfort with three feet of cover at hand. But, golly! that water was dirty. "We'll chance it," I said, "overland." So I walked on the bank, and McAvity after me. But I felt very naked out there, cocked up on the swell of the globe, with the dawn staring at us. That's the trench instinct. A fox has it, too. You can tell by the crouch of his belly.

I was half-way across the deep part when all the queerness turned natural suddenly. In that strange, empty place I heard a quite common, familiar sound—a quick swish past my head and then a little flicking or dipping noise on my right, and I saw a tiny trickle of loosened earth slipping down from the face of a mound of loose chalk at the back of our trench.

"Into it, Jemmy," I yelled. "Into the sewer and tuck in your tuppenny." You see, I had to repeat. Wodjabet had become like a man without either sense or obedience. He simply stood up all the straighter, as if that bullet had put new life into him. He didn't mind me at all. He just looked east as if something over that way interested him hugely.

"Hang you, don't keep me waiting," I said. But of course I wasn't leaving it to him to get us both shot. I hustled him into the trench and took to it myself and ran him along, with his nose well down to the bilge and my knee in his back when required, till that trench was seven feet deep. Then I damned him at leisure, all the way back to our rotten dug-out. He took it all meekly, and yet I could swear he didn't take it to heart! He wasn't minding anything I said; he was scarcely hearing it—only trying to do the polite thing—and the shine was going down in his eyes. Once or twice he began, "How the blazes——?" and then stopped and went on with his private wondering.

You may be wondering, too, how the blazes a bare slope of earth could project rifle bullets. It's perfectly easy. We learnt to snipe, too, later on in the war. We found how to fire out through a hillside or a broken gun-wheel, or the ear of a stinking dead horse. But we were a fine vivid green in those early days and it puzzled us all. So I thought I would report to Mr. Parke,

commanding the platoon, the way that slope was spitting. So "Down you go," I said to McAvity when we reached the front door of the little home. "I'm walking on."

He said bashfully, "Sergeant, I have a very great fear that I left my gold watch on the shelf at the post I was in. I'll not be a minute." He was for making off back the way we had come.

"You will not," said I, "nor a second. You'll go down at once to your rest." I knew he had no watch at all, gold or tin.



He turned in, quite good, only sorrowful, like a sweet-tempered child when it is held

up in a raid on the jam. Then I went on down the trench to tell Parke.

It could have been hardly ten minutes since Wodjabet was relieved when Parke



"There seemed to be nobody there till the surface broke, all of a sudden, and a man shot up full-length out of the water into the air."

Parke was delighted. "We'll go out," he said, "to-night and feel that slope all over with our hands. I'll come and take a first look at it now." So we went off at once.

and I came into sight of that beast of a place. We saw the maddest sight. Where the water was deepest it had the washy, splashy look that a swimming-bath has, or the pool at the Zoo where the seals go switch-

backing in and out of the water. We couldn't see why, for there seemed to be nobody there till the surface broke, all of a sudden, and a man shot up full-length out of the water into the air, like a dace when it jumps to get away from a pike. Next moment there came a report of a rifle, but by that time the leaping figure had dropped to the water again and was wholly submerged, except about an inch of up-turned face, which I took to be the infatuated creature's breathing arrangements.

Parke turned to me, gaping. "Who's that damned Jack-in-the-box?" Even as he said it, Wodjabet leapt a foot higher than the last time, the rifle went off, and Wodjabet was safely re-immersed.

"Private McAvity, sir," I reported. "A proper madman, sir. Just come off guard and goes out to bait the Fritz sniper."

"Come here, you fellow there," roared Parke.

The sound of many waters may have deafened McAvity. Or perhaps he had no ears at all, at the time, for anyone but his own particular Siren. Certainly all that he did when his officer called was to leap a third time, the leap of a salmon at a weir. Once more the rifle went, and once more Wodjabet submerged triumphantly, all but the tip of his periscope.

Parke was raging at the indiscipline of it. He was a big strong boy and a good officer to his men, but peppery. He rushed into the water and took a good hold of McAvity's tunic-collar and lugged him ignominiously out into safety. Then he got down to work cursing McAvity up hill and down dale.

"I only meant a little bit o' fun, sir," Wodjabet gasped humbly.

"Fun! Tossing up with the Germans for Allied man-power!"

Presently Wodjabet was allowed to slink off, with his ears full of fleas, to dry in the sun. "A good man, Sergeant?" Parke inquired, looking after him. Parke's good-humour was returning. The weather was hot and he didn't much mind getting wet.

"First-rate, sir," I replied. "And his rifle a picture. A little bit mad, sir, of course."

"All the best of us are. Well, keep him alive as long as you can. We'll put a breast-work to-night at that place. You'd better swim under water till then."

IV.

WODJABET looked troubled all that day, rather like a spaniel that's chock full of good feelings but knows it has been naughty. There was something else wrong with him too. I guessed it was this: he was feeling like a born punter who has been dumped down at Monte Carlo and knows the tables are near—can almost smell them, and yet isn't let in at the doors.

Anyone but himself would have slept in the sun all the part of that day that he wasn't on guard. Wodjabet lay about, but he never really closed an eye: he only blinked the way a cat does, letting on that it's sleepy when really its eyes are a-glow with some grand private excitement or other. He hadn't slept one wink the night before, what with the relief and the bit of guard duty, and then the two duckings. So you may guess he was tired and sleepy and all by the time it was dark the next night and he doing a guard at the quietest, healthiest post on the whole platoon sector. I chose it for that, to keep him from trying to pull Fritz's leg any more. But I hadn't left him there half an hour before I thought, "What if it's only too quiet?" and jumped up and went round to visit him.

Blowed if he hadn't done just what I was fearing. He wasn't lying down. He would never have done that. He was standing up, jammed back and front, his knees against the front wall of the trench, his back against the rear wall, his rifle between his legs, and his head fallen forward. The sleepiness had caught him where he stood, as some sorts of gas do, and he had gone off with scarcely any change of position.

Of course the crime was capital. But there are too many capital crimes in a war—so we sergeants thought, and we took leave, in my battalion at least, to run a little martial law of our own making. It was a law utterly lawless. Whenever we found a sentry asleep we just fell upon him and throttled and pummelled and kicked him awake. He always thought Fritz had come over and got him. The sergeant who did it might have been tried once for assaulting a private, and then a second time for screening a crime. But, of many men that we treated this way, I never knew one who told tales or pleaded that he'd had a right to be shot, nor yet one who ever took a chance again of waking with two German hands squelching his gullet.

I liked McAvity well, but duty is duty, even when it's a little irregular. So I set about him. And this I will say—that I couldn't wish any sentry of mine who woke up with a German's thumbs on his windpipe

to give a better reaction. He woke as fast as a dog and started to fight like a good one. It might have taken me all I knew to garotte him. But I had hardly begun before I heard somebody saying, "That will do, Sergeant. The legal punishment will suffice," and there was the adjutant, Captain L. Graves, standing back in a shadow, seven yards off. He must have been there, standing like that and not moving, before I arrived.

None of us liked the adjutant. He was a hard man and given to slinking about where you wouldn't expect him—an officer of the sort that thinks every man must be rotten if only you knew. "When did this man go on guard?" he asked me.

"One o'clock, sir," I said.

The adjutant looked at his watch. "Half an hour ago," he said. "Fast asleep in ten minutes. Get the next relief now, and put this shirker under arrest."

I could see Wodjabet flinch at the name he was called. I made bold to say, "He's a most fearless man, sir. A good soldier till now."

"Keep that for the court-martial, Sergeant," said the adjutant.

I had to go. I knew the holy passion the adjutant had for getting soldier-men punished.

V.

They did not shoot McAvity—did not even quite condemn him to death. Of course I swore pretty hard about the fatigues I had been giving him for days before. Mr. Parke made good play with some aspirin that he said he had given the prisoner because of a ducking: Parke got the doctor to say it was rare stuff for sending people asleep. What with this, that and the other they made it out that five years' penal servitude was the right fit for Wodjabet's misdoing, and that he had better start serving it after the war.

That was a new law, I heard. You might get twenty years, but you would just go on with your duty till the war ended and then go to quod. And everyone said that if you went straight till the end of the war, and we won, Haig was sure to say, "Just let him off, for me, this time." A good law too, and I shouldn't much mind if the same sort of ticket-of-leave were given in peace-time.

Wodjabet came back to the platoon looking a bit bewildered and dull. We were out of the line at the time, for a Divisional rest, but he brightened up when we went south for the big September attack on the Somme. All that autumn and all the next summer and autumn in the big fights east of Arras and Ypres he did well and looked fairly contented and never got hit, as does happen sometimes, though not very often, to people who go about asking for more trouble than comes of itself.

I never do that. And yet I stopped a lot of little bits of shrapnel, all from one burst, at Passchendaele on November 6. That meant an operation a month, for six months, to dig the bits out of my innards. So I didn't get back to the centre of things till the August before the war ended. Still, by Heaven's own luck, and a little contrivance, I was sent once again to the good old platoon a few days before the big push east of Amiens, when the Germans turned to go home.

There was scarcely anyone left of the first jolly crowd that had come out together to France about three years before, with all their troubles to come. But there was Wodjabet still, and a mighty reputation he had by that time. He was the oldest soldier in the company; he'd won the Military Medal at Cambrai, and the strange lads that filled the platoon used to sit round him and wait till he'd speak. The man Graves was dead, to the satisfaction of all; Parke commanded the company; even the Colonel, I heard, had got an eye cocked on McAvity as a stout man who had slipped up by a fluke and was now making good in spite of it all, like a story-book hero.

He was a treasure to me, with the queer innocent boys I had to look after. The one thing I didn't quite like in his ways was a sort of disquietedness. The better things went with the war, the more uneasy he seemed. "You're not fretting," I asked him at last, "over that little trouble?" It was towards the end of October I spoke.

"I'm thinking," he said, very careworn, "the war will be apt to break down on us any time now."

"God hurry it!" said I. "Have you any objection?"

"They're talking," he said, "of some Fourteen Points the Americans have, that would stifle it, lock, stock and barrel."

"And what's wrong," I asked him, "with winning on points?"

"It's the state we'll all be in after that has me distracted," said Wodjabet, scratching his hair like a person in misery.

"Have you no sort of job to go back to?" said I.

"There's more jobs in my trade," he said, "than there's men that can do them."

"Are you frightened," I asked, "of this 'land fit for heroes' the crooks have been hawking?"

"Ah, then, would I be minding the blather and lies of them?"

He was on guard at the time, and I going my rounds. Trenches didn't come to much in those last weeks of the war. Fritz was going back too fast to dig them good, and we were too tired, too, to dig them much deeper. There was a good deal of standing about among houses and trees and any sort of odd cover, and some fancy shooting. At that very moment a whimper like a gnat's came singing past, between us, and overhead the gunners were sending the big whistling sighs of their shells singing augustly along over great arches. Wodjabet drank in the noises, now grown almost homely. "It's that we'll be missing," he said ruefully.

"Missing!" I said. "I'll miss nothing the night that it stops but the sleep that I've lost for three years in preventing mad devils like you from getting their heads free in trenches."

"Do ye think ye will, Sergeant?" he asked very earnestly. "Will ye be able to sleep? I'm sore fearing the salt will be gone out of life. We'll be safe, and that's fine, but what if the taste be gone out of the safety itself, and the good of it lost on us? Well then, isn't a man safe when he's dead, only he hasn't the feel of it, and the feel is the thing? And the feel isn't there to be had, except there's a weeny bit of a risk, for your safeness to show up agen it. Sergeant, I'm getting terribly frightened."

He looked it. The man was almost entreating me to say something from which he could sincerely draw comfort. "D'ye think," he went nervously on, "ye will find it enjurable—lying in bed all the night, and the air gone as flat as the washin's of beer they'd swab off the zinc of a bar, and never one waft of a shell nor the whine of one bullet to make the grand feel of your safety bite on your mind? Won't ye be feeling as if there was nothing ye'd offer to eat but would turn into sawdust?"

"I will not, Jemmy," said I. "With the great diseases there are in the world, and a job to be lost, and railway disasters and fire and one sort of plague and another, I am expecting to do exceedingly well without any praying for war in our time."

"Ye really think so, Sergeant? Ye're not kiddin' me?" You could see he was honestly hungering to be able to feel I was right, and not just an irrational optimist nor a dealer in blarney. "Well," he sighed, "praise God, there's a little war left. Ach, if only a man had the trick to store up enough of the feel of it in his soul while it lasts! Just to consume by degrees all the rest of his life. Begob! he could stand anything."

He was in torment.

VI.

DURING the war's last three weeks he grew more haggard daily. By November the tenth the rumour had grown pretty strong that at any time now we might get the word to knock off. We were all wondering what we should do when the whistle went—give three cheers for Fritz and get our back pay and go home in the evening, or go on mounting guards and playing soldiers, or what. On the last night of all, as it turned out to be, I could see Wodjabet trying to hide his distress when I visited him at his post. It was nearly midnight then, and we were in the suburbs of a little mining town.

"Sergeant, is it the truth that I'm hearing?" he said, when he had reported all quiet.

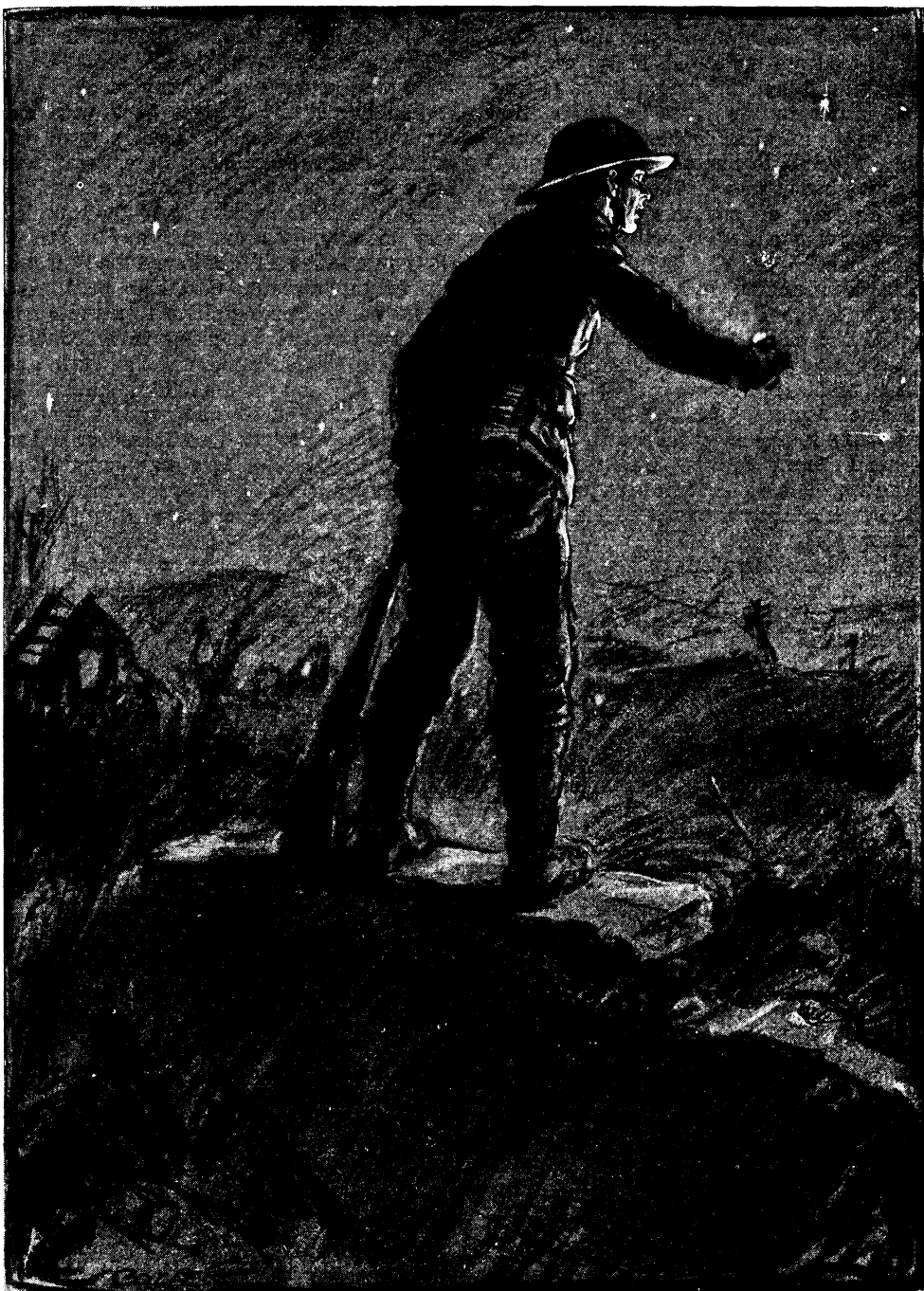
"There's no cease-fire order in yet," I replied.

"Can you tell me, Sergeant," he said, "the name of the place that I have to me front—the town with the lights blinking in it?"

"That's Mons," I told him, "where the war began."

"It'll end there too, I'm thinking," he said very sorrowfully. "I'm told when a stag's getting old and near dying he'll make for the place he was foaled in. It's now or never. We're all but through with it."

I didn't see then what he meant. The next post that I had to visit was in an old ruinous shed that we had loopholed, two hundred yards farther on. I did my business there and started back. Then I saw Wodjabet standing full-length on top of a low wall that was close to his post. There was a bright moon and in it he looked like a black statue hoisted above the whole countryside. He was staring out east at a low railway embankment—we all took it that Fritz was just on its far side.



" He had got out a flash-lamp and thrown the light up on his tin hat and his face and down on his uniform and his rifle."

I quickened up a bit, meaning, of course, to make him stop playing the fool and get down. But the ground was all broken and messed up with old rusty wire: I couldn't go fast; and before I was twenty yards nearer to Wodjabet he had started loosing off shot after shot at that embankment. I yelled to him to hold his fire and get down, but he was past hearing, I guess—past thinking of anything in the world except having a flutter with Fritz before closing-time.

I kept on running and damning his eyes, but long before I could get at him he had emptied the magazine of his rifle, and then he had got out a flash-lamp and thrown the light up on his tin hat and his face and down on his uniform and his rifle. He must have been fairly raging to get Fritz to see that the best mark in the war was going a-begging. Mark!—he was like the Nelson statue in Trafalgar Square, with a search-light upon it.

Fritz did nothing at all. It was as if he weren't there. I suppose he wasn't killing that night unless you quite forced him. Four years and a bit had sufficed for his needs. But Wodjabet wouldn't take No for an answer. Perhaps he saw me rushing back at last and heard me hallooing and knew the game would be up if once I got at him. Or perhaps he never noticed me and was taken up wholly with that mad desire of his to take the Germans on once more, for a real good flutter, before the casino could put up its shutters. Down he got, with a jump, from this lighthouse he'd made of himself and off into the east, waving his lamp, to rout out the Germans—make them turn to, willy-nilly, and give him the thrill he required.

"Right off it!" I thought, as I stumbled along. But he was one of my men, to be kept out of scrapes by any means within reason. So I gave chase. I gained on him a bit, for he checked once and again to re-load and let the embankment have another clip of cartridges.

Half-way to the railway I got him to notice me for the first time. "Come back with me, Jemmy," I said, "and I'll not have you tried for deserting."

"Desertin'!" he cried. "It's the war is desertin' meself. I'm hunting for it high and low, and it hiding, and me in the fearfullest need that ever I had."

He was keeping out of my reach, but I begged him again, "Come back with me, Jemmy. Remember the back pay to get, and the medals and all, and a great rest from the war and the trouble that's on you."

"Is it rest from the war?" he squealed very bitterly. "From the war! And it all the rest that I'll get in me life! Good-bye to ye, Sergeant; God help ye." And off he went, plunging ahead to murder any German alive for refusing to snipe him. Right up the embankment he went and stood at the top for a minute, flouting the moon, and loosed off another five shots.

I suppose Fritz got tired at last, or he had to defend himself. There was just the one shot of a rifle that didn't sound British, and Jemmy flopped forward and didn't shoot any more. So I wrote him off a loss and went back to the rest of my business. The war ended next day before dinner, and we had him buried by tea-time.

VII.

I HAVE heard a man say we are all a bit mad, and the proper certified loonies only a little bit farther off it than most of us are. I thought of it later that night. For beyond a doubt it was queer to stretch down to sleep with not one gun at work anywhere, nor the chance of a shot all the night. For three years or more the old rumble and grumble had been the most regular thing in one's world. They say when you come off a long steamer voyage you can't sleep your first night on shore, because it's too quiet—no beat of the engine. I couldn't sleep either. I lay awake thinking how easily somebody else might be put off a lot more than I was—how he might feel he was not missing only a homely old noise, but something that kept the whole life of him going, as the air does to your blood. It must have been so with McAvity. And if you put it at that, it was good enough sense, by his lights, to get rid of his life in trying to keep it worth living.

BUT IF IT HAD BEEN A FINE DAY—

By E. M. DELAFIELD

ILLUSTRATED BY NORAH SCHLEGEL

BOTH of them had, mildly, been looking forward to the expedition; Susan in the rather chilly, analytical fashion of a woman who has always been just one degree too clever for her surroundings, and Rupert more simply, taking genuine pleasure in his own academic appreciation of church architecture.

Besides, the heat-wave was congenial to both of them. It made them enjoy things more.

Susan had a poor circulation, and Rupert was accustomed to Ceylon. The English climate, especially in the summer, was a trial to them. "But in weather like this——" Rupert said, waving his hand towards the cloudless sky, the rich green and gold of the meadows, and the dust-powdered hedges of the Rectory garden.

Susan leaned agreeably over the white gate, feeling in herself a vague resemblance to a Randolph Caldecott illustration of the less robust kind.

"There are a good many hills between here and St. Nancie, but we ought to do it in a couple of hours without having to hurry. And we can either take sandwiches or get something at the little inn. It's a tiny inn, and I don't suppose they often have visitors, but I dare say we can get bread and cheese."

"What could be better than bread and cheese?" Rupert inquired rhetorically. "I should far prefer that to sandwiches, personally. One carries sandwiches in a little parcel, and if one hangs it on the handle-bars, the string breaks, and if one puts it in one's pocket, the sandwiches get all squashed up together. No, no. Bread and cheese."

Without commenting upon the peculiarity of Rupert's experiences with sandwiches, Susan nodded.

She also preferred bread and cheese—chiefly because the halt at the inn would afford her an opportunity of powdering her nose after two hours of bicycling on a hot day.

Susan, at thirty years of age, was sufficiently provincial to prefer an unpowdered nose to one powdered in public, and sufficiently feminine to dislike the thought of being seen by any man with a shiny face. Rupert, she knew, admired her in a pleasant, detached kind of way; and she, in return, liked him with a tepid friendliness based upon their common conviction of being persons rather superior to their neighbours.

Susan had spent all her life in her father's parish, and until Rupert's mother had come to live in the largest house in the village and Rupert to spend his leaves there, she had been devoid of congenial companionship. It was natural that she and Rupert should make friends.

No doubt, at first, people had wondered "if there was anything in it"—for Rupert was twenty-eight and unmarried. But Susan, quite level-headed and rather scornful, knew well that there was nothing in it. She had never been attractive to men, and Rupert only liked in her those qualities that he would have liked equally well in another man. Her acute critical sense—that her father the rector sometimes called her lack of charity—had long ago informed her that Rupert was a sentimentalist.

He would certainly marry, but he would have to believe himself in love first.

In a way, it was a pity, Susan thought dispassionately. She knew that she could make him an excellent wife, and be an admirable mother to his children, and she had read intelligently the works of Havelock Ellis and others, and fully realised how unfortunate it was for a clever woman to

have to remain unmarried just because there were not enough men to go round.

There was, however, nothing to be done about it, and a Platonic friendship was better than nothing. Very likely, when Rupert returned to Ceylon in the early autumn, all by himself, people would think that he had proposed to her and she had refused him.

Or would they know, only too well, that the daughters of rectors in remote country parishes never refused an offer of marriage, should they have the incredible good fortune to receive one?

Probably they would.

These cynical reflections pursued well-accustomed channels in Susan's mind whilst she leant over the Rectory gate, amiably gazing at Rupert.

"Oh, rather," he agreed. "I'll be here at ten o'clock to-morrow, then. Sure that's not too early?"

"Quite sure. We shall be well on our way before the hottest part of the day has begun. Although I, as you know, can never be too hot."

"Nor I," said Rupert firmly.

Susan went indoors and ironed her most becoming frock—a dark-blue linen, that she intended to wear next day. She had bought a new hat, of dark-blue straw, with a blue-and-purple ribbon twisted round the crown, and she tried it on in front of the glass.

Her complexion was fresh, her eyes and eyebrows good, and she had excellent teeth. These advantages did not amount to beauty—nevertheless, with the dark-blue frock and her new hat, Susan was agreeable to look at, and although the mirror was too small to reflect it, she knew that she had a very nice figure, and could ride a bicycle vigorously and well. Rupert would no doubt notice these things, since he was quite observant on his own plane. He would not say anything about them, because his conversation was never personal. All the same, it was nicer to look one's best than not, and it had a stimulating effect upon one's general outlook.

Susan went to bed with quietly agreeable anticipations of the morrow.

She awoke to find them shattered.

The heat-wave had treacherously broken.

There was no more blue sky. Ragged grey clouds were tearing about all over the place, the tree-tops were swaying wildly, the wind was whistling, and the temperature had fallen to incredible depths.

"It will be raining," said the Rector, "before night. Mark my words."

Susan had no need to mark anybody's words. She sullenly substituted a coat and skirt and wool jumper for the dark-blue linen frock, an old hat for the new, fragile one, and disgustedly put on a burberry that she rightly considered to be shabby, shapeless and unbecoming.

"We shall go, so long as it isn't absolutely pouring," she said. For both she and Rupert belonged to the class of persons who do not allow themselves to be deterred by the weather. Our Island race breeds many such—as well it may.

Rupert arrived at ten o'clock, his mackintosh blowing about his legs, his face already slightly mottled with cold.

Both of them were too proud to say anything about the change in the weather. Rupert said, rather morosely, "Well—if you're sure you're ready——" and Susan replied, "Yes, rather——" and off they went, facing a disgusting wind that seemed to come from three different directions.

As Susan had said on the preceding day, there were a good many hills. They pushed their bicycles up them in silence. Even on the comparatively rare occasions when it was possible to free-wheel they said little, because the wind compelled them to screech.

At last they arrived at St. Nancie, which was a very small village with a very ancient church.

They leant their bicycles against the wall of the churchyard and went in.

Rupert at once revived slightly, and began his habitual progress—a kind of solemn creep—round the interior of the church. Soon he was talking, fluently and firmly, about corbels and capitals and Early Perpendicular characteristics.

Susan replied intelligently.

She was quite reasonably interested—and besides, she had read up church architecture in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* the day before—and exercise had restored her circulation. She found it, indeed, much pleasanter in the church than outside, and almost began to enjoy herself. Presently a smart, rattling sound against the windows informed them that hail, or rain, or sleet, or all three, had begun, and they went to the door.

It was sleet.

"The inn is only just across the road. Let's go there. By the time we've had

some lunch, this'll be over," Rupert suggested.

They hurried across.

By tacit consent, neither of them mentioned bread and cheese, so redolent of the open road, and of picnics by the wayside.

Susan asked the landlady what they could have, and was told cold ham and hot tea.

They had the dingy little dining-room entirely to themselves.

Susan prowled round it, rather as Rupert had prowled round the church.

There was a fireplace, with pink paper in the grate, and above it a mantelpiece, on which stood a china figure of a dog wearing a top-hat, a pair of empty red glass vases, a grey wool mat, a snapshot of a row of houses, framed in white metal, a small nondescript piece of brass that you wouldn't like to throw away because it might belong to something, and a tin lozenge-box containing tin-tacks.

There were three chairs—walnut and green plush. There was a sofa—walnut and green plush and horsehair. In the middle of the room was the dining-table, with a green wool cloth over one half of it, a whitish table-cloth over the other, and in the middle a small aspidistra, in a pot swathed with crinkled green paper.

The atmosphere conveyed chilliness and stuffiness at one and the same time.

"What a room!" ejaculated Susan.



"The sleet continued to lash more and more wildly, the wind to shriek, and the temperature to fall."

"Well, well," said Rupert, more tolerantly. "It's very typical, I suppose. When one thinks of that beautiful building, not more than five hundred yards away——"

They talked about the church whilst the landlady tossed pieces of cutlery here and there about the white-clothed half of the table and finally put down a loaf of bread and a dish of sliced ham.

"I'm sorry I've nothing cooked," she said, in a tone that indicated no intention of making good the deficiency.

"Oh, it doesn't matter," Susan returned—and her voice, also, held an implication—to the effect that she and Rupert were not accustomed to this kind of thing, but would put up with it because they could not very well help themselves. The hot tea was much the best part of the meal, and they lingered over it, still talking spasmodically about the church, and both of them glancing from time to time at the window.

The sleet continued to lash more and more wildly, the wind to shriek, and the temperature to fall. At last Rupert said:

"I really don't quite see how we're to ride home in this. What about trains?"

"There's no station that I've ever heard of for miles and miles. Granville must be the nearest, and that's eight and a half miles. Besides, I don't know about trains. Perhaps there's a time-table."

They obtained a time-table.

"Only one afternoon train—4.50—and that's marked *e*," said Rupert—and his suspicions of *e* were almost immediately justified. "*Not Thursdays.*" They looked gravely at one another.

"You see," said Rupert, "we had the wind behind us on the way here. We should have it right in our teeth going home, and it's blowing a hurricane now."

Susan, although surprised to hear that the wind had ever been anywhere else but right in their teeth all the time, was quite prepared to believe that it held even worse buffetings in reserve.

"It would practically mean walking the whole way."

"It's out of the question," Rupert declared. "We must get hold of a car, and they'll have to hitch the bicycles on somehow. I'll talk to the woman."

He went out, and Susan looked at the pink paper in the grate, and wished heartily for a fire.

Presently Rupert returned.

"They've got a car, but her husband is out with it. She thinks he'll be back by four o'clock, and then he'll want some tea, but he'd take us home afterwards. I'm afraid there's nothing for it but to wait. Of course, if it clears up in the meantime, we can go."

Nothing could have looked less like clearing up. But it was only two o'clock.

Rupert sat down and began to smoke, after offering Susan a cigarette that she refused.

They talked about the church, and about architecture, and about Ceylon, and about people they knew, and books they had read.

And all these subjects were exhausted before the hands of Susan's wrist-watch had crept round to three o'clock.

She got up and walked to the window.

"I think it's clearing a little," she suggested—untruthfully.

"I'll go outside and have a look," Rupert promptly responded.

While he was gone, Susan strayed into the small entrance in a forlorn quest after possible entertainment. It was even less promising than the sitting-room, for it contained nothing whatever except oilcloth, a thin bamboo table, and a door with a ground-glass top. Next to the door was the staircase, of yellow pitch-pine.

Susan mounted it dejectedly.

She was unexpectedly cheered, on reaching the top of the stairs, by the sight of another bamboo table, on which stood, under a glass case, a musical box.

It was a very old-fashioned musical box, probably French, with a pallid little doll, dressed in faded pink sateen and wearing flaxen ringlets, standing on the top of it. A key lay at her feet.

A rush of wet air from below made Susan look down. Rupert had come in again.

She wasted no breath in asking him if the weather showed signs of improving, for she knew that it did not and would not. Instead she called out quite excitedly:

"Come up here and see what I've found!"

Rupert came.

"Do you suppose it's in working order?"

"We might try."

Susan lifted off the dusty glass case, and Rupert, after a little peering about, inserted the key and turned it.

The musical box emitted a spasmodic jangle of notes that presently resolved itself into a rather ghostly rendering of *Les Cloches de Corneville*, and the pallid little doll gyrated slowly and uncertainly on her pedestal.

At the end of about three minutes the tune died away, and the doll rocked and tottered into immobility again.

"Do you suppose it has any other tunes?" said Susan.

"Perhaps it has. We'll try."

Rupert wound again.

It was *Les Cloches de Corneville* once more.

Susan remarked, resolutely: "It's rather

nice, isn't it? I mean, it's nice and old-fashioned. And I like the doll."

"Yes," said Rupert, without much enthusiasm. He also glanced surreptitiously at his wrist-watch. Susan saw him doing it.

Ten minutes past three.

"I think," said Rupert, "that as we are here, and there's still a little time to put in, I'll just go across and have another look at the church. Don't you think of coming, Susan, unless you really want to—you're bound to get wet, even crossing the road."

"Did you ever read a book called *Eliza*, by Barry Pain?" was Susan's strange reply.

"I don't think so. Why?"

"Only that I—I was just reminded of it. They spent a day in the country, in the book, and it rained and—and they looked at the church."

"Did they? Well—if you're sure you don't mind——"

"Sure," said Susan—almost too heartily.

She remained, still thinking of Barry Pain's *Eliza*, and at the same time absently watching Rupert hurry downstairs—(why hurry, when even things done slowly seemed to occupy no time at all?)—and struggle into his wet mackintosh and out at the door.

Then, after standing undecidedly at the top of the stairs for a moment or two, she turned back to the glass case and the musical doll, and listened to the *Cloches de Corneville* all over again.

At twenty minutes past three she went downstairs slowly, reminding herself that the landlady had said that her husband and the car might be home "at four or five o'clock."

Twenty minutes past three was practically half-past three, and from then until four o'clock was only half an hour. Only half an hour, and the car might be there.

"It's having nothing to do," said Susan to herself with vexation. "At home, I'd give anything for a whole free afternoon. But *here*——" She very nearly decided to go and join Rupert at the church, but reflected prudently that they had probably some time longer to spend in one another's society, and had better husband their conversational resources.

At seven minutes to four, Rupert returned, and said that it was raining harder than ever.

"But the car ought to be here any minute, now," he added hopefully.

Susan cynically deduced that Rupert's computation of the probable extent of their *tête-à-tête* had run on parallel lines to her own.

"Let's ask the landlady if there'll be time for some tea before we start," she suggested.

Having tea would be something to do.

The landlady said:

"Oh, I ought to have told you. There's been a message to say that Fred's party missed their train. He's taking them on now, so I don't suppose he'll be back here before seven. It wasn't his fault. I've never known him miss a train before, with the car. But it's this storm. It must have delayed him, you see—Fred's ever such a careful driver—and then, when they got there, well, the train had gone. But he'll take you on to-night, some time. Fred's like that; he doesn't care how late it is, nor what sort of a day he's had. He'll take you, even if it's not till ten o'clock at night."

Testimonials to Fred's energy and devotion to duty, however, left Susan and Rupert cold. They looked at one another in a dismay that neither attempted to conceal.

At last Susan, in a flat voice, heard herself say: "Well—perhaps we can have some tea?"

"Oh, certainly," said the landlady.

"And could we, do you think, have a fire?" Rupert added.

"Certainly. I shall have to charge you for it, of course."

"Of course," said Rupert with immense dignity. And he added, perhaps rather unnecessarily, to Susan: "It would be worth it, anyway."

In silence they watched the fire being laid and lit, emitting green smoke, then no smoke at all, then a thin, disheartened flame.

The landlady brought in a teapot, cups and saucers, a plate of bread and butter and a glass dish of jam.

Tea took up a little time, but not as much time as they had hoped.

Susan thought for a wild moment of suggesting the musical box again, but the fire, after all, was burning, although by no means extravagantly, and it seemed better to sit down beside it on the green plush sofa and try and think of something to talk about. On the other side of the hearth, on an upright green plush chair, Rupert sat—and he also was trying to think of something to talk about.

He liked Susan very much, and had often thought what an intelligent woman she was. In Rupert's opinion she was, indeed, the only intelligent woman in the neighbourhood. They had, he considered, a very great many things in common. Only it seemed that all of the things had been exhaustively discussed between them already, so that there was

little or nothing left with which to fill up the next five hours or so.

Rupert, to his own startled dismay, found himself wishing that Susan was quite another kind of girl altogether. Neither intelligent nor well informed, but more like the type of woman that he was accustomed to meet in Ceylon. He thought of girls whom he had known out there far less well than he knew Susan, and of how easily an hour or two slipped away in their society.



"On the other side of the hearth, on an upright green plush chair, Rupert sat—and he also was trying to think of something to talk about."

With girls of that sort, an afternoon and evening of enforced waiting together, alone over a fire, would be simply an entrancing

opportunity. *Was* Susan as academic as she appeared to be ?

Rupert looked yet once more at his watch, saw that it was barely a quarter past five, and in sheer desperation decided that so much tedium was no longer endurable.

In spite of his predilection for ancient churches, Rupert was not entirely without experience in other branches of knowledge.

He began to talk to Susan about herself. Susan, surprised, nevertheless did not lose her head. She responded readily, and encouraged the pursuit of the personal element—but she gradually shifted it from herself to Rupert.

Without consciously noticing that he was doing so, Rupert began to tell Susan things about himself, interesting and illuminating things he could not help feeling them to be, that threw a light upon his whole character.



Susan, after all, only saw him as an amateur of church architecture, a dutiful son, and a country neighbour. She knew nothing at all about Rupert as he saw himself.

Fluency gained upon him every moment. Both of them forgot to look any more at their wrist-watches. The fire, untended, grew warm, and glowed.

They were no longer making conversation, they were talking.

" You're the only person that I've ever talked to like this," Rupert said, towards six o'clock, oblivious of the inaccuracy of this statement. " But I do feel that you understand, Susan."

" I think I do," Susan responded.

They looked at one another rather shyly.

Then Rupert stood up, moved nearer the fire, poked at it aimlessly with his boot, drew his chair forward, and gained his true objective, which was the possession of Susan's hand.

He rather ingeniously gave a false air of casualness to this gesture by remarking:

"You don't wear any rings."

"Why should I?" Susan inquired. "No one has ever left me any jewellery—nor ever will, probably—and I certainly can't afford to buy any—and I'm not, and never have been, engaged."

"But you've been in love?"

"No," said Susan sturdily.

"I shouldn't have thought you were—cold," Rupert hazarded.

"I don't know whether I am or not. But when you're a parson's daughter, and live all the year round in the depths of the country, and haven't any brothers, you just don't meet anybody to be engaged to, that's all. I never see any men of my own class at all—except here and there, at tennis parties and so on. And, of course, they prefer the younger girls."

"Younger! What bosh! I don't know your exact age, but you certainly don't look a day more than twenty-five."

He waited a moment, but Susan did not enlighten him about her exact age, although she looked gratified by his compliment.

Rupert was still holding her hand. Susan, in the silence that followed his last speech, made a slight, restive movement, as though to withdraw it.

In the merest fraction of a second, a number of considerations flashed across Rupert's mind.

Some hours, in all probability, still lay before them. Until this last hour they had suffered all but unendurable boredom. Now, however, the atmosphere had become warm, friendly, thrilling.

But he knew quite enough about women to feel very certain that Susan would not allow things to go any further unless he very speedily put them upon a well-defined footing. She wasn't the kind to let anyone hold her hand, or give and take an easy kiss, just to pass the time. Well—he respected her for it, in a way. And it made her more desirable, too, since it meant that she had never cheapened herself with other men.

"Susan," said Rupert solemnly, "you're not like any other girl that I've ever known."

"I suppose," said Susan rather wistfully, "that you've known a great many girls in Ceylon."

But she discounted the wistfulness by taking her hand out of Rupert's as she spoke.

"I've danced with lots of them, of course, and played about, at picnics and races and so on. But I've always felt that I should have to come Home to find the girl I wanted to marry."

"Haven't you found her *yet*?" said Susan, flippant from sheer nervousness.

"I don't know. Don't you think one ought to marry for companionship, more than for anything else?"

"It's the only *lasting* foundation," Susan said, in the tone of one reaching a careful and dispassionate conclusion.

"Community of tastes."

"Yes," said Susan, thinking of the church and the musical box.

"The same sort of outlook on life——"

"Oh yes."

"Those sort of things really matter much more than just being in love."

With this Susan disagreed, but not wishing to discourage Rupert she said nothing.

"Susan, have you really never been in love?"

"Never!"

"But I bet heaps of people have been in love with you?"

"If so," said Susan dryly, "they've concealed it very well. But I don't mind telling you quite honestly that I've always thought I should make a good wife. I'm not stupid, and I've looked after Father so long that I know the sort of things men like and don't like."

"A father," said Rupert, not without hesitation, "isn't exactly the same as a husband."

"I know that."

He put his arm round her.

"Susan, I think you're a darling. I do really, and I—I wish you'd be engaged to me."

"Of course I will, Rupert," said Susan warmly and readily.

The happy, blushing look on her face suited her. Rupert kissed her.

"I've been wanting to do that for ages," he remarked—not untruly, for the afternoon at the inn had indeed assumed the dimensions of ages by this time.

The more Rupert made love to Susan, the more he wanted to go on doing so. She was shy, with the rather pathetic shyness of a woman unused to admiration, but she was

also responsive, and after a time, as though secure of Rupert's interest, she, too, began to tell him about herself.

The time flew.

There came a knock at the door that caused Rupert to spring backwards, and Susan to put her hands to her hair, and the landlady came in.

"Fred's back at last," she proclaimed. "He stayed on in town a bit, not thinking he might be wanted, and took his time coming home. When I told him you'd been waiting ever since two o'clock, he wouldn't hardly believe it."

The eyes of Susan and Rupert turned to their wrist-watches, as so often before earlier in the day.

It was eight o'clock.

"If you wouldn't mind him just having a cup of tea—he's in the kitchen now. He'll be ready to take you on in another ten minutes for certain. And he says he can manage the bicycles."

They got ready, Rupert paid the landlady, and they both said good-bye to her.

"I'm sorry you had to wait so long," she remarked. "It was a pity, having such a dreadful wet day. There's nothing *to* a place like this on a wet day."

"There's the church," said Rupert. "I'm very glad to have seen it."

They got into the comfortable darkness of the shabby old car, closed against the driving rain, and Rupert held Susan's hand under the rug.

They were both extremely happy.

They said things like:

"I wonder if every engaged couple is as happy as this——"

"When did you first think——?"

"Don't let's tell anyone just yet; we'll let it be our own secret just for a day or two."

And just as the long drive was drawing to its close, Rupert, now deeply in love with his *fiancée*, murmured into her hair:

"Darling, isn't it wonderful? To have been half across the world as I've been, and then, after all these years, to find you, whom I've always been looking for, here at Home! I believe in Fate. Don't you?"

"Yes."

"This—us—it's Destiny," said Rupert with supreme conviction.

"I know," Susan agreed.

She felt confident of the future, proud and happy.

As Rupert had said, it was Destiny. They had been meant for one another from the beginning. Susan was none the less content because the mildly cynical little voice within her, that Rupert would never be allowed to hear, made inquiry:

"But what if it had been a fine day——?"

ORANGES AND LEMONS.

ORANGES and lemons,
The bells they will chime,
As long as there are oranges
And sweet lemon-thyme.
Oh! young days, and parties,
And the moon overhead,
And a dear homely candle
To light you to bed!

Oranges and lemons
I've plucked and to spare—
Herb-beds and garden-plots,
It's I have been there.
Daylight and starlight
I've danced through the game—
But they've burnt out the candle,
And sleep's not the same.

ANNE PAGE.

THE CYNIC

By E. TEMPLE THURSTON

ILLUSTRATED BY W. W. LENDON

WHATEVER Mr. Bennett lost through the lack of his belief in human nature, he made up for by a consummate belief in himself. He actually distrusted Mrs. Bennett. Not in matters of honesty, but in all affairs of common sense. He even constantly doubted her affection. When first, for a year or so after their marriage, they had no family, he would say he believed she did not want to be a mother of his children. But when a boy and then a girl were born, and she tended them with the maternal care that had been aroused from her nature, he would frequently declare she loved her children better than she loved him.

There are men, there are people like that, for it is not a matter of sex. Nothing in life will convince them but the integrity of their own minds.

By all the laws of irony which would appear to govern the affairs—the oft-laid schemes—of men, it ought to have been proved to Mr. Bennett how egregiously wrong he was. Yet there is a greater irony even than this. It goes to prove that when a man has a poor opinion of human nature he is often right.

But the tragedy that happened to Mr. Bennett is the greatest irony of all that can be dealt to any man. It established the fact that he was right, while at the same time it demonstrated how infinitely better it would have been for him had he been wrong. This is the kind of cynicism there is in life which confounds the prophets. What are you to think? How are you to believe? Is it best after all to adopt the attitude of Mrs. Bennett? To fear God and love your neighbour as yourself? Does life require all the shrewdness and intelligence we bring to it? Is the secret of it after all to be found in the mouths of babes and sucklings? In the minds and hearts of such ingenuous and affectionate creatures as Mrs. Bennett?

This is what happened.

Mr. Bennett had a prosperous business in the jewellery trade. With a profound contempt for the taste of the public, he sold everything from platinum to rolled gold. He even stocked those cigarette-cases which displayed in pale flesh-coloured enamels the nude bodies of attractive ladies, surprised, as by the three elders of the Apocrypha, in the act of bathing. He did not exhibit these in the window. He had more consideration for the respectability of his business than that. He kept them in a drawer with a few other delectable pieces of the same nature, and only showed them to prosperous-looking men from the North of England who came up to London on Cup-tie days and did not know what to do with their money.

"I have a choice little thing here," he would say, and out of the drawer produce the shameless article. As the man from the North looked at it with commercial approval, Mr. Bennett would hazard that perhaps it was not exactly a thing to let one's wife see in one's possession, but that undoubtedly there were ladies who were pleased with that sort of fancy goods.

"It gives an air, even to a gasper," he said.

It was astonishing how many times he had to renew his stock in that private drawer.

Upon these principles, relying on the weaknesses, the peculations, of human nature, and by trusting no one, Mr. Bennett did a good trade. He knew in a moment, directly they entered the shop, the young men who wanted to deceive their lady-loves with rolled gold, from those who desired to impress them with platinum. And in the display of his shop-window he catered for all.

Over a tray of wedding rings, all stamped eighteen-carat gold, he had placed a printed card on which could be read the words—

"MARRY THE GIRL."

It was impossible to know how responsible

that was for putting the idea into some young woman's head. But he did a great business in wedding rings.

"People who buy jewellery," he said with some shrewdness to his wife, "are either pretending they're better off than they are, so don't trust any one—see the cash. Or else they're giving a present they've no right to give, in which case they're feeling extravagant and want the best. No man comes into a jeweller's shop if he can help himself, and women have no money. If I see a woman come in alone, I know she has a bit of something that was given her she wants to sell me on the quiet. The only beauty of jewellery to women is that they can sell it again."

It was quite in vain that Mrs. Bennett suggested that there might be lovers who, in an impulsive generosity of spirit, wanted to commemorate their love. Mr. Bennett laughed at her.

"Aren't there people buying wedding rings who want to buy them because they're fond of each other?" she asked.

Mr. Bennett shook his head with infinite superiority.

"The number of people really in love," he said, "wouldn't pay for the velvet on a tray of wedding rings."

Horribly true perhaps, but how cynical!

"How about *us*, then?"

He requested her, if possible, not to be silly.

"Am I the sort of man who'd go marrying a girl," he asked, "just because I had to?"

She admitted he was not, but was far too simple to have meant anything by it.

All the same, it was obvious by results that Mr. Bennett knew his business; and when one day a well-dressed lady and gentleman entered the shop while Mrs. Bennett was having a few moments' chat, he needed only to look once at his customers before he whispered to her:

"Run along. There's some money here."

With a quick glance at the elegant young man and at the dainty beauty of the young woman who was holding his arm, Mrs. Bennett did as she was bid. But there were two in love with each other if ever there was love. She had one more glance through the glass door as she went into the back premises. Nice she looked. Him, too. And the way she was holding his arm! How could Mr. Bennett believe any harm of two good-looking young things like that!

She was sitting in the parlour, musing upon beauty and youth and love and all the extravagant things which her husband believed in for nobody except himself, when Mr. Bennett came in.

"Give me that pen and ink," he demanded quickly, as though he wanted to save them from falling.

It was this tone in his voice that made her ask:

"What for?"

"He wants to write a cheque."

"Has he bought something, then?"

"Diamond and platinum ring. Forty-five pounds."

She opened her eyes. That sort of customer was not met with every day. Well, she could have told herself that they had money. A woman doesn't get the coat and skirt she was wearing without it.

"Engagement?" she asked, seeking for romance.

"No," said Mr. Bennett, bearing off the pen and ink. "Says she's his wife. Well—they must say something," and he was gone.

His wife! How terribly they must be in love! Mr. Bennett had certainly given her an engagement ring. Her wedding ring was twenty-two carat and the heaviest there was in the shop. But since then—they had been married five years—surrounded by all that jewellery, living with it from day to day, he had given her nothing.

Timidly, modestly, fearfully, she had once remarked upon the fact. Mr. Bennett had said:

"My dear, you don't run after a 'bus once you've caught it."

That attitude of mind was heartless enough. But the simile! A 'bus! Was she like a 'bus? Certainly she had had three children in three years. She stood in front of the long mirror in her bedroom. She turned from side to side. A 'bus! For a few moments even her highly coloured visions of the beauty of life paled. Was it all a catching of 'buses, a paying of one's fare, and then, with utter finality, arriving at one's destination? Horrible! She refused to believe it. It was not what Mr. Bennett meant. It was only his manner of speaking. He was always saying things were like things. It sounded clever. She trusted him with the possession of more romance than that. Moreover, turning sideways and looking half over her shoulder, her figure was not so bad. Not like a 'bus.

Accordingly, when she heard of these two in the front shop, the young man buying a platinum diamond ring for forty-five pounds

for his wife, her heart was irresistibly drawn to them. If there were romance in other people's lives, why not in hers ? She crept quietly to a point of vantage where, unobserved, she could watch them through the glass door.

He had just signed the cheque and handed it to Mr. Bennett. The young lady was squeezing his arm and looking up—wasn't it lovely! — into his face. And Mr. Bennett wasn't even looking at them. He was just reading the cheque to see if it was all right. Wasn't that like him! And then he said something to the young gentleman, and the young gentleman said something back to him with a laugh. The next moment Mr. Bennett was coming towards the glass door. Mrs. Bennett bolted back into the parlour.

She was dusting the mantelpiece when he entered with the cheque in his hand.

" Just put on your hat," he said, " and run round to the Metropolitan Bank and hand this cheque in, and see if it's all right. I've promised that young man to let him have his ring round at the hotel where he's stopping in an hour's time."

Mrs. Bennett gazed at him in amazement.

" You didn't let him take it with him ! "

It became his turn to stare.

" Take it with him ? "

" Yes."

" A forty-five-pound ring ? "

" Why not ? "

" And all I've got is a cheque ! "

" Well ? A young man like that, in love with his wife, isn't going to do nothing shady in front of her—is he ? "

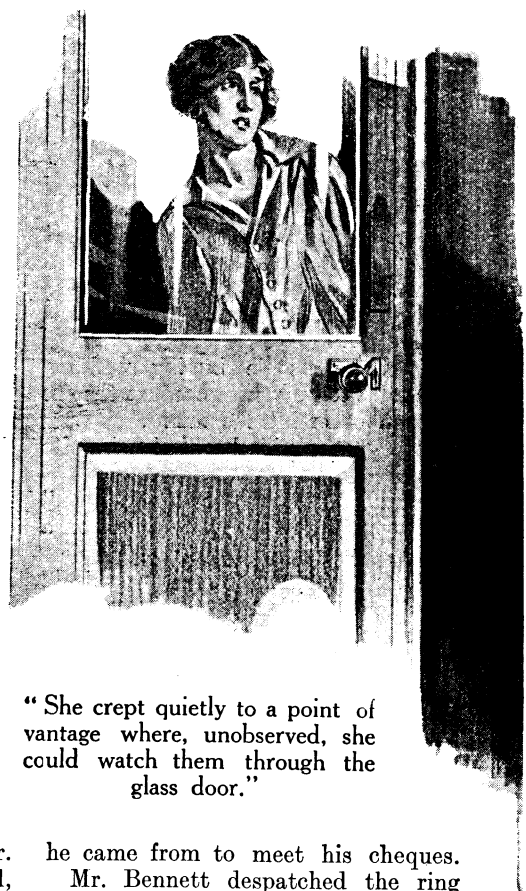
To her it was a sound argument. To Mr. Bennett, with his knowledge of the world, it was stupendously funny. He shouted with laughter.

" If ever I want a short cut to the workhouse," he said, " I'll ask you the way. In love with his wife ! How do I know she was his wife ? And if she was, how do I know he was in love with her ? And if he was in love, what's that to prevent him selling the ring the moment he gets out of the shop ? Forty-five pounds is worth more to someone in love than a diamond ring any day."

Then to this Mr. Bennett added a very honest agenda. He said :

" Not that he'd ever get forty-five pounds for *that*."

There is a lot to be said for Mr. Bennett. So much that, after that last remark, Mrs. Bennett did not feel qualified to say any more. She took the cheque obediently to the Metropolitan Bank, and returned triumphantly with the information that it was quite all right. The gentleman was passing through London, and they had had instructions from their branch at the place he came from to meet his cheques.



" She crept quietly to a point of vantage where, unobserved, she could watch them through the glass door."

Mr. Bennett despatched the ring to the hotel in under the hour, and, countering his wife's reinforced belief in human nature, said :

" All right, my dear—all right. The world's full of angels, and seeing we've got wings you and I will fly to Hampton Court on Sunday if it's fine, 'cos I've made twenty pounds out of that little bit of business."

It was on occasions like this and in this manner that Mr. Bennett kept alive the sense of beauty in Mrs. Bennett's mind. A man who could say things like that must have romance. But then Mr. Bennett, on his own showing, was the only honest man in the world. He distrusted all others.

It was the following week. Mr. Bennett had cut himself shaving. These little details have their place. He was upstairs putting some alum on his chin to stop the bleeding. Mrs. Bennett was watching the shop when, through the glass door, she saw the young gentleman enter. Carrying a warm heart beating in her breast, she went to serve him.



"The young lady was squeezing his arm and looking up into his face. And Mr. Bennett wasn't even looking at them."

"My wife so likes that ring I bought the other day," he said, "that I want to get her a brooch to go with it. I should like to see what you have."

She fluttered to show him everything. She was all smiles. He was a charming young man. What a nice voice he had! And so easy to please. He admired everything. She could not help hoping that Mr. Bennett's cut would bleed just a little longer. Not unkindly. Not to do him any harm. That, after all, was a method of treatment, years ago. To bleed people. Not to do him any harm. She just wanted to serve this young man. Not to be interrupted.

And apparently Mr. Bennett did bleed, because in ten minutes the young gentleman had selected a diamond brooch for twenty-five pounds, and her husband was still upstairs.

"If you'll let me have the pen and ink

again," said the young gentleman, "I'll just write my cheque."

She brought him the pen and ink. While he was writing on the counter, Mrs. Bennett was selecting one of the nicest little leather cases they had and fitting the brooch into it. She was just wrapping it up in paper and was about to hand it to him when Mr. Bennett entered with a piece of cotton-wool adhering to his chin.

"Good morning, sir," he said.

"Good morning," said the young gentleman agreeably. "I've just been buying a brooch to go with that ring." He handed Mr. Bennett his cheque. "I hope you found the other all right," he added, smiling.

"Oh yes, sir. Quite. Quite—of course. Shall I send the brooch round to the same address?"

Send it round! Mrs. Bennett was horrified. It was an insult! She was holding out the parcel in its paper wrapping. She was almost thrusting it across the counter into the young man's hand. But he was smiling. He didn't seem to mind in the least.

"Oh yes. Send it round," he said, "if you want to make sure of the cheque."

Mrs. Bennett remained staring at her husband.

"I call it awful," she said. "You wouldn't trust the angel Gabriel!"

Why the angel Gabriel? She didn't know. Probably because Mr. Bennett had put angels into her head, which is a romantic thing to do in any case, and Gabriel was the only angel she knew.

"I would not," said Mr. Bennett imperturbably. "Not if he was to come with both his wings into the shop this minute. Just run round to the Metropolitan Bank and take that cheque with you."

Mrs. Bennett's triumph when she returned was truly a little disconcerting. They had just looked at the piece of paper and passed her over the money without a word. He ought to be ashamed of himself, and he ought to lose all the good customers he ever had. For certainly a gentleman like that would never come back to him again.

He tried not to care for any of her remarks. He had sold two nice pieces on which there was a handsome profit. So what did it matter if he had lost a customer? But undeniably the point of her tongue—not that Mrs. Bennett's tongue ever did really have a point—had pierced him. His faith in the dishonesty of human nature was considerably shaken.

When, therefore, for the third time, the next Saturday morning, just before he was putting up his shutters, the young gentleman walked into the shop again, he could hardly believe his eyes. Had he come to return the articles? That was all Mr. Bennett could think. But, according to the principles of that business, nothing was returnable unless it could be proved to be other than what he had said it was. And if Mr. Bennett gave a guarantee he was always sure of what he said, and he never put it in writing unless he could help. That ring was platinum and the diamonds were diamonds. He could prove that. What it had cost Mr. Bennett was another matter upon which nothing had been said.

But it was not to return the ring. It was to buy still another article of jewellery. His wife wanted a pendant to complete the set. Astonishing! Now perhaps Mrs. Bennett would admit her ignorance of human nature. He believed it was entirely due to his precautionary measures that he had kept rather than lost a client. The man admired his business methods. That was what it was. Mrs. Bennett entering the shop at that moment, he informed her in a jocular way that the gentleman had come to get a pendant to go with the brooch and the ring.

She heard the underlying triumph of Mr. Bennett in that jocularity. She was amazed herself. The only interpretation she could put on it was that, besides being romantic and in love with his wife, the young man must be extraordinarily good-natured. What a character! How lovable! She beamed upon him as he selected a pendant from among those Mr. Bennett had set out on the counter. Without being asked, she ran to get the pen and ink as he produced his cheque-book.

"Of course the banks are closed now," the young man was saying as she returned, "but I hope you'll let me take this back with me. My wife's so anxious to have it. How much did you say it was?"

Mr. Bennett fitted the jeweller's monocle to his eye and examined the pendant. He knew it was priced fifty pounds. That allowed him twenty-five pounds profit. But out of the corner of his eye he had seen the beaming acquiescence in Mrs. Bennett's face. He knew it was going to be impossible to refuse the young man's request. It was against all his principles to accept a cheque. Yet circumstances were heaped against him. He unscrewed the monocle from his eye, and said:

" Fifty-three pounds ten."

The young man wrote the cheque. With eager fingers, Mrs. Bennett was already wrapping up the pendant. He took it with him. He was gone.

" Don't like it," said Mr. Bennett moodily, as the door closed. " What did you want to look at me like that for ? Upset all my principles. That's what it did. How do I know it isn't a confidence trick ? These first two cheques all right and the third a dud. I can't get to the bank till Monday. And by that time he's gone. I don't like it."



" They smiled at each other when he came into the dock."

He told the boy to put up the shutters, and for the next two hours he roamed about the house, at intervals taking the cheque out of his pocket-book and examining it. He would not speak to Mrs. Bennett. He was a profoundly unhappy man.

At half-past three his spirits rose, but in a peculiar manner. There was a violent ring at the house door. Mrs. Bennett came to inform him that a Mr. Richards, who said he was a pawnbroker, wished to see him. Mr. Bennett almost ran down the stairs.

Hadn't he known it ? Within the hour of leaving the shop that young man had been to the pawnbroker's offering to sell the pendant. Not satisfied with the price, he had taken it away. To another pawnshop, of course. But the pawnbroker had been suspicious. Knowing the class of article Mr. Bennett sold, he had just come round to see what his suspicions were worth. What they were worth ? They were worth one thing. They were worth the confirmation of all Mr. Bennett's principles. He put on his hat and rushed round to the police station. Mrs. Bennett remained at home with a heavy heart.

Four hours Mr. Bennett was gone. He had had no tea. He was exhausted when he returned. But at least he was triumphant. So great was his triumph that it almost compensated him for all he had been through. And what had he not been through ? He

told it all to his wife with cynical grunts and exclamations of satisfaction.

"Was he there at the hotel? Of course he wasn't. While he was here getting the pendant his wife had packed up their trunks and gone. His wife?" he snorted. "Expect you'd have married Rahab to make an honest woman of her."

This knowledge of the Bible was one of the shafts with which Mr. Bennett frequently wounded his wife. She sat there listening with her head cast down and her heart aching for the duplicity of human nature and that nice young gentleman in particular.

But Mr. Bennett and the detective in plain clothes from the police station had tracked him down. They had found him in another hotel. One more suited to his financial substance. One of those quiet hotels in a side street. And they had got him. He was safe in a cell. Mr. Bennett had him charged with obtaining goods under false pretences. Said anything? Of course he hadn't said anything. What was there to say? Mr. Bennett had walked with him and the detective to the police station and had charged him there, and all he had said was: "I gave you my cheque."

"His cheque!" shouted Mr. Bennett. "Didn't I tell you it was a confidence trick? You'll see it in the Sunday papers, and on Monday too. There was a reporter there, and I gave him the whole story. Nice little tale to read with your breakfast before going to church."

Mr. Bennett went out specially and bought the Sunday paper. And it was there. Alleged confidence trick. But it complimented Mr. Bennett and the pawnbroker on their promptitude.

On Monday morning Mr. Bennett went to the police court to give evidence. Two nights in the cells didn't seem to have upset the young man very much. That woman was sitting in the back of the court, and they smiled at each other when he came into the dock.

To the magistrate, Mr. Bennett gave his evidence clearly and with confidence. The pawnbroker was brief. The plain-clothes detective was precise. And then the magistrate asked the young man if he had anything to say.

He remarked there was only one thing. The magistrate leant forward.

"I should just like to know," said the young man, "whether anyone has been to the bank to see whether my cheque would be honoured."

The magistrate asked the detective if this had been done. It had not. The magistrate asked Mr. Bennett.

"The banks were closed on Saturday," said Mr. Bennett. "That's where he had me. I was a fool and I trusted him."

"I would ask your worship," said the young man politely, "to put back the case until someone has been to the bank with the cheque."

The case was put back. In half an hour a constable returned from the Metropolitan Bank to say that the cheque had been honoured without any remarks.

It was very difficult to tell all this to Mrs. Bennett. It was difficult to explain. She may not have quite understood it from her husband's account. But it was quite clearly stated in the papers.

And it would have appeared that Mr. Bennett was all in the wrong. He believed he was himself until one morning, later in the week, when he received a letter from the young man's solicitors informing him that they were proceeding to claim damages for wrongful arrest and defamation of character.

He sat in the parlour, staring at the letter. How much would he have to pay? By the time it was all finished the young gentleman would probably have got those things for nothing.

For nothing!

He stared at Mrs. Bennett.

"Don't you see?" he said in a whisper.

But Mrs. Bennett could see nothing beyond an honest young man righteously indignant and defending his name and that of his loving wife who shared it with him.



THE WOODSTACK

By EDEN PHILLPOTTS

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

AS butler at Oakshotts I was a busy man no doubt, with a mighty good master who knew he'd got a treasure. Because wine and tobacco be second nature to me, and though very sparing in the use of both, I have great natural gifts and a sort of steadfast and unfailing judgment for the best. And as master be fond of saying in his amusing way, the best is always good enough for him, so Sir Walter Oakshott of Oakshotts trusted in me, with great credit to himself and applause from his guests. Never was such an open-handed man, and being a widower at fifty, with no mind just then to try again, he let his sociable instincts run over for his friends, and Oakshotts, as I sometimes said, was more like an hotel than a country house. For he had his gardening pals come to see his amazing foreign rhododendrons in spring, and his fishermen pals for his lakes and river-banks in summer; while so soon as September came, it was sportsmen and guns and dogs till the end of the shooting season.

So I was a busy man and also a prosperous, because money cleaves to money and Sir Walter's friends were mostly well-to-do, though few so rich as him; and the gentlemen were experienced and knew a butler when they met one.

But few be too occupied for romance to over-get 'em sooner or later, and at forty I fell in love—a tiresome thing at that age and not to have been expected from a bachelor-minded man same as me. And if I'd had the second sight and been able to see where the fatal passion was going to take me, I'd have kept my eyes off Jenny Owlet very careful indeed.

But so it was, though fifteen years separated us there's little doubt Jenny loved me very well afore Tom Bond appeared. Because I'd never loved before I saw her, and even an elderly man—and a butler's always elderly by virtue of his calling—has a charm to the female mind if she knows he's never loved before. In me Jenny saw a well-set-up and personable party, inclined a thought to a full body, but smart and active, clean-shaven and spotlessly clean every way, with brown eyes and a serious disposition, yet a nice taste for a seemly bit of fun. My hair was black and kept sleek and short, of course, and my voice was slow and deep, and my natural way of approaching all women most dignified, whether they belonged to the kitchen or the drawing-room. And, of course, she well knew I was a snug man and her worldly fortune would be made if she came to me. That was what I had to offer, while for her part she was a high-spirited thing and good as gold, aged twenty-five, with a cheerful nature and a great art for taking what pleasure life had to offer the second kitchen-maid at Oakshotts, which weren't very much. But she never groused about her hard career, or was sorry for herself, or anything like that. I liked her character and I liked her good sense and I much liked her nice and musical voice; and if she'd been educated, she'd have shone among the highest by reason of her back answers, which I never knew equalled. Not that she had any chances in that direction with me, because I'm not a man to let my inferiors joke with me, though none knows how to put 'em in their place quicker than I do.

Her eyes were betwixt blue and grey and sometimes favoured one colour and sometimes t'other, and her hair was a light brown and her figure inclined to the slim. But she was very near about five foot eight—two inches shorter than me—and of an amazing activity and enjoying most perfect health. Her home was in Little Silver, which is our village; and only poverty and the need for work had took her out of it. There she tended her widowed father, and he had such a passion for the girl, her being his only one,

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that 'twas only the shadow of the Union Workhouse ever steeled him to part from her. But she saw him oftener than her day out and would many a time run like a lapwing the mile to his cottage, so as he should have a glimpse of her. And it was her wages that helped the man to carry on. He hated her working at Oakshotts and prayed ceaselessly to her to come back and starve along with him, for he was a very unreasonable fashion of man—a dog-like man with one idea and one worship and one religion, you may say. In fact he lived for Jenny alone, and when I came to be acquaint with him, I feared it was to be war to the knife between us. He always proved queer and difficult, and nought but my great love for Jenny would have made me tolerate a man like Joshua Owlet for a moment.

You couldn't absolutely say there was a screw loose in him, because to love your only child with all right and proper devotion is in the order of nature ; but to come between a daughter and her future mate, when the mate was a man like me, seemed weak-minded, to say no more. A very selfish man in fact, and the thought of Jenny having a home of her own away from him, though to any decent father a right and proper thing to happen, got Joshua Owlet in a rage, and I had to exercise unbounded patience. He was a small-brained man, and that sort is the most obstinate.

"Such a woman is bound to wed, Mr. Owlet," I told him, "and lucky for you in your humble way of life that she's fallen in with one that can make her a home worthy of her and lift her up in the land. And if you love her so fierce, surely the first thing you did ought to feel is that, when she takes me, your mind will be at rest about her for evermore. I ain't retiring yet and, be it as it will, I'm Devonshire, and the home I determine upon won't be very far ways off, and she'll be within call and you'll find yourself welcome under my roof in reason."

He scratched in his grey beard and looked at me out of his shifty eyes, and if looks could have killed he'd have struck me dead, for he was a malicious sort of man and a pretty good hater. Owlet wore rags for choice and he picked up a living making clothes-pegs and weaving osier baskets. That was his mean fashion of life, and he was allowed to get his material down in Oakshotts swamps, where the river overflowed and the woodcock and snipe offered sport in winter. But the keepers hated Owlet poking about, because they said he took more than withies from the osier beds.

Well, the man most steadfastly refused to sanction the match and held off and cussed and said he was Jenny's duty and she didn't ought to dream of leaving him under any conditions. Of course he held no power over her and at heart she never liked him very much, because he'd served her mother bad and she remembered it. But she told me straight that I was first, father or no father, and that she'd come to me when I was ready to take her. So I could afford to feel no fear from Joshua and went my own way and dwelt on a clever scheme by which I'd bide along with Sir Walter after marriage and see my wife uplifted in the establishment—to help the housekeeper or something like that. For well I knew my master would pleasure me a long way before he'd lose me. I'd served him steadfast and we'd faced death together in the Great War.

And so I settled down in my usual large and patient spirit and just kept friendly touch with Jenny's father and no more. Nor did Jenny say much upon the future when she was home, and so, no doubt, Joshua got to hope he'd have his way in the long run.

And then came Tom Bond upon the scene of action and the fearful affair of the woodstack began to take shape. We wanted a new first footman, and he offered, and his credentials looked so right that Sir Walter, in his careless way, didn't bother about 'em, seeing by his photograph that Tom was a good-looking man and hearing he stood six feet two inches. And certainly, after his arrival, nobody thought no more of his character, for a cleverer and more capable chap you couldn't wish to meet. He knew his job from A to Z, and I will say here and now that, merely regarded as a first footman, Tom was never beat in my experience. He had an art to understand and anticipate my wishes and a skill to fall into my ways that gave me very great satisfaction, and he pleased the gentlemen also and shone in the servants' hall. In fact I seldom liked a young man better, and what followed within six months of his arrival came as a fearful shock upon me, because by that time I'd grown to feel uncommon friendly to the wretch.

He was amazing good-looking, with curly hair and blue eyes and very fine teeth. And he was one of those men that win the women by their nice manners and careful choice of words. You never heard him speak any-

thing unbecoming and he was just as civil to the humblest as he was to the housekeeper herself. A care-free man seemingly, with his life before him and such gifts that he might be expected to make a pretty good thing of it. An orphan, too, or so he said.

Thirty-two he claimed to be, but I judged him to be a bit more in reality.

Then came the fatal cloud. Knowing that I was engaged to Jenny, he took good care to keep the right side of her on my account, but all too soon there dawned the making of the future tragedy and he was pleasuring her for her own sake. He hid his games from me, of course, and it was an easy thing to do, because I stood above any suspicion with regard to Jenny ; but a time came when he didn't hide his games from her, and it was only when I began to see queer signs about her I couldn't read, that any uneasiness overgot me. I do think most honest that she didn't know what was happening to her for a long time, because she loved me, or thought she did ; but little by little her old gladsome way along with me wilted and I found her wits wandering. She'd be dreaming instead of listening to my discourse, and then she'd come back to herself and squeeze hold of my hand, or kiss me, and ask me to say what I'd just said over again. I passed it off a lot of times and then on the quiet had a tell with her father, thinking maybe if there was anything biting her, he might know it.

But he said little. He only scowled and glowered and wriggled his eyebrows like a monkey—a nasty trick he had.

" If there's trouble on her mind," said Joshua, " you may lay your life it's the thought of deserting a lonely father. And if conscience works in her, as I hope to God it will, then you'll find yourself down and out yet, William Morris."

That's how he talked to me ; but my great gift of patience never deserted me with Owlet, and seeing he knew nothing about any real disquiet in his daughter's head, I left it at that and hoped I was mistook.

Mighty soon I found that I was not, however, and then, in the hour for my daily constitutional, which I never missed rain or shine, I turned over the situation and resolved to approach Jenny on the subject and invite a clean breast of it.

There was a woodman's path ran on the high ground behind Oakshotts, and here I seldom failed to take an hour's walk daily for the sake of health. Up and down I'd go under the trees in the lonely woods, and mark the signs of nature and rest my mind from the business of the house. And sometimes Jenny would come along with me, but oftener I went alone, because our regular afternoon out gave me the opportunity for her company and she couldn't often break loose other times.

There was an ancient woodstack on the path hid deep in undergrowth of laurels and spruce fir, and not seldom in summer I'd smoke a pipe with my back against it ; but oftener I'd tramp up and down past it, where it heaved up beside the narrow way. They was always going to pull it down, but there never rose no call for wood and it was let bide year after year—a very picturesque and ancient object.

During an autumn day it was that I went there, with the larches turned to gold and the leaf flying from the oaks and shining copper-red on the beech trees. And I resolved once for all to challenge Jenny upon her troubles, because if her future husband couldn't throw no light on 'em and scour 'em away, he must be less than the man I took him for.

I'd about spent my hour and was turning back to the house half a mile below when Jenny herself came along, well knowing where I was ; and so I wasted no words, but prepared to strike while the thought of her set uppermost in my mind. She spoke first, however, and much surprised me. 'Twas her way of breaking into the matter did so, and she well knew that what she had to tell would let the cat out of the bag.

" William," she said, " I couldn't bear for you to hear the thing what's happened except from me, and I want for you to be merciful to all concerned."

She was excited and her hair waving in the autumn wind so brown as the falling leaves. Her eyes were wild also, and her mouth down-drawn, and a good bit of misery looked out of her face.

" I'm known for a merciful man where mercy may be called for, my lovely dear," I said to her. " Us'll walk up and down my path once more since you've come. I've long known there was a lot on your mind and went so far as to ask your father what it might be ; but he only said 'twas your conscience up against you leaving him."

" 'Tis my conscience all right," she answered, " but not like that—a long sight more crueller than that. Tom Bond has gone to see father this afternoon and—oh, William, I wish I was dead ! "

I kept my nerve, for that was the only hope in her present frame of mind.

"'Tis a very ill-convenient thing for my future wife to wish she was dead," I told her; "and why for has Tom gone to see your father? Mr. Owlet ain't the sort of man to find a gay young spark like Tom much to his taste."

"You must listen," she said, "and God forgive me for saying what I'm going to say, but I can't live a lie no more, William, and Tom can't live a lie no more. He loves me and I love him. I thought I loved you, and do love you most sure and true and never better than now; but I don't love you like I love him."

Then she poured it all out—how they'd found their real selves in each other and so on—and I couldn't make up my mind on the instant whether she spoke true, or whether she only thought she did. Being a proud sort of man, I very well knew that there'd be no great fuss and splutter on my side in any case, nor yet no silly attempts to keep her if her heart was gone; but she appeared so excited and so properly frantic and so torn in half between what she felt for Tom Bond and what she felt for me, that I perceived how I must go steady and larn a lot more about the facts before I stood down. There was my self-respect of course, but there was also my deep affection for the girl. What did amaze me was that I'd never seen the thing unfolding under my eyes, and that none of the staff had called my attention to it. But none had—man or woman—and when, afterwards, I asked one or two of the elder ones if they'd marked any improprieties I ought to know about, all said they had not. So that was another feather in Tom Bond's cap in a manner of speaking, for he'd made amazing sure of his ground and got himself safe planted in Jenny's affections without giving one sign, even to my eyes, that he was up to any wickedness.

I knew he was clever, but shouldn't have thought anybody could be so clever as that with the woman of my choice. And I knew, only too well, that Jenny must have been amazing clever also. I calmed her down and showed no spark of anger and didn't say a hard word against Bond; but that night, after dinner, I bade him come in my pantry and tell me what he'd been doing. Because a lot turned in my mind on the way he was going to state the case, and I weren't in no yielding mood to him. Words flowed from the man, like feathers off a goose, and under his regrets and shame and all the rest of it, was a sort of a hidden note of triumph, which I didn't like at all, because it showed he was contemptuous of me at heart and knew he'd got the whip-hand.

"It's this way, Mr. Morris," he said. "I've got nothing much to tell you that will excuse what's happened. I knew you were engaged to her and all that, and God's my judge, I never dreamed to come between; but Nature's stronger than the strongest, and I hadn't been here six months before I knew it was life or death between me and Jenny. I fought it down and so did she, and we suffered a terrible lot more than you'll ever know or guess; but such things happen every day and true love never did run smooth. But the truth of what has happened you can see on her face, and nought will ever change her again. And I'm the sun to your moon if you'll excuse my saying so. And the triumph to have won such a woman is all lost for me, because I know a man like you—so straight and honest—will never understand such a thing and find it hard to pardon. It will darken our lives, no doubt, that she made such a fatal mistake and thought she loved you and made you think the same; but you're old enough to know that girls make that mistake every day of their lives, and think love's come to 'em before it has, and only know the difference when the true and only man appears afore 'em."

He ran on like that, and I marked that his old, straight glance was gone. There was a new expression in his eyes and a sort of suggestion that he was tired of the subject and only concerned to save his face and let me out so quick as might be. He spoke like a conqueror, in fact, and I well knew he didn't care a farthing for my feelings under his pretence that he did.

But I weren't going to let him out quite so easy. I'd seen war, which Tom Bond had not, for I'd been my master's batman at the front and was known for a brave man, though not a warrior like Sir Walter. So I weren't going to be swept aside as a thing of no account in the matter, and I meant to know a lot more about Bond himself before I went out of the game and handed Jenny over.

When he had done I spoke and went on polishing while I did so:

"A man who would have run into this bad work open-eyed is a man who'll need a power of thinking about," I said to him. "On your own showing you've played a very dirty and devious trick to win this woman, or try to do so, and it lets light on a side of

your character I'd overlooked because, no doubt, you was parlous quick to hide it. You knew Jenny Owlet had ordained to marry me at her own wish and desire, and knowing that, you made love to her and was

any temptations that would make you a knave if you did yield to 'em. And I'm still minded to think the woman would be a lot happier and safer with me than ever she'd find herself with a man that could do what



"'William,' she said, 'I couldn't bear for you to hear the thing what's happened except from me, and I want for you to be merciful to all concerned.'"

sloking her affection away, while all the time I befriended you and praised you and set store upon you. And that's both ends and the middle of it. And no call to bleat about nature, because nature's a heathen thing, and you well knew it was no time to yield to you've done. And that I say though I may be 'the moon to your sun.'

"So for the present, till I've had more truck with her and got to the bottom of her feelings and put reason and decency afore her, I'll ask you to behave and keep off her.

She's engaged to marry me at this minute, whatever the pair of you think to the contrary, and I hold her to that undertaking until I am well satisfied it would be better for her if I broke it. So now you watch out, or you'll find yourself in a tighter place than you ever was before."

I threatened on purpose, to see how he'd take it; and I found he took it ugly.

He showed his beautiful teeth and his brow came down and his eyes flashed.

"You'll fire me, I suppose?" he said. "That's the reward of being honest and straight; and much good that will do you. You won't win her back, because she's gone and well you know it; and now you're going to bully me and rob me of my job."

"Go," I answered the man, "and don't be a fool. If you've lived along with me for near a year, you well know I bully none. I shan't fire you; but I order this and no more or less: keep off her till I'm satisfied about you and satisfied about her. And keep off her father likewise. Joshua Owlet has got a screw loose where his daughter is concerned and it won't advance nothing if you go to him. Now be off."

He made no answer, but I pointed to the door and he cleared out.

We were busy at the time and the house full of gentlemen, for it was half through October and shooting in full swing. So I left it at that for a bit and avoided Jenny also till her afternoon out; and then I told her we'd walk together and drink tea at the "Wheatsheaf" in Little Silver. Which we did do, and I explained the position and bade her hold off Tom until she heard me on the subject again. She was a lot cut up about it and poured scorn on herself and appeared very wishful to please me in the matter; but there wasn't no more love-making, of course; and to make Jenny understand the gulf that now separated us, I let her pay for her own tea. I loved her still most ardent, but I meant for everything to be done decent and in order; and so far as I was able to see, both of 'em fell in with my wishes and waited for my future commands.

Then a most amazing thing fell out, and Jenny, who had spent an afternoon with her father, told me he was very wishful to see me. So I called on the man and heard news that astonished me a good bit.

Joshua Owlet was changed to the roots! He told me a story that chimed very close with my own wishes, and for that reason I was tardy to believe it; but he gave me chapter and verse and, when I heard my own life was got in danger, I did believe it as the safest course to pursue.

"That Bond is a rogue, William," Joshua began, and he was terrible excited from the start off.

"I'm inclined to agree with you," I answered, "for he's done a dirty thing and, so far as I can tell, he's worked very artful to get Jenny away from me, which no honest man would have set out to do."

"That's nothing," he answered. "The girl has been a fool and still is; but the point is this. While she was all for him, Bond felt the going good; but now, along of your high-minded action and the way you've took it and the way he's took it and what I've said, she's in two minds yet. Love him she did and love him she do and don't deny it; but she begins to see, as well she may, that for her lifelong salvation, if she must wed, she'd have a safer and a better time with you than Bond."

Well, I was a good deal surprised to hear Joshua talk so reasonable, and what he said next astonished me still more.

"That's so far to the good," I answered. "For I care a lot too much for the maiden to stand between her and her real welfare. But, apart from her, I've always suspicioned Tom Bond was too good for this world till this happened. Men ain't so perfect as him, and when I heard he'd got round Jenny, I began to fear there was more to the young man than meets the eye."

"A plucky sight more," declared Owlet. "You can leave him for a minute. I'll come to him—the wicked rascal. But first I want for you to know that I'd a darned sight sooner see my daughter married to you than him, or any other man; and though I hate like hell for her to leave me, I ordain, since it's got to be, that you have her and none other. And none else ever shall."

I couldn't believe my ears, of course, but he was terribly in earnest. He tore at his beard as his manner was, and his eyes flashed, and I couldn't tell for my life whether he was speaking truth or was lying to me.

"So much for that, then," I said, "and I'm very glad to hear you take that view, for it was time you saw sense in the matter. But I don't wed Jenny if she don't want to wed me—not to please you, or nobody. And that brings us to Tom Bond. At this moment I'm in a difficulty, because seeking, where I counted to learn more about him, I've been headed off. His credentials was all they should be and Sir Walter didn't trouble

to verify 'em; and asking him for 'em a few days since, I was a good bit put about to hear that master couldn't find 'em. But he dared me to say there was anything wrong with Bond, because he thinks the world of the man and wouldn't have him away on no account whatever."

"I'll lay my life the blackguard stole those credentials poking about where he didn't ought," said Joshua; but I answered 'twas little likely.

"The master be almost sure to have destroyed 'em, for he's got a mania for tearing up in a hurry," I explained, "and he'll often do so and lament too late."

"I hope he did, then, and I'll tell you why," said Owlet to me. "And, come to think of it, I guess he did, for Bond is terrible anxious and worried and like a rat in a trap. He knows you are on his track and he knows that if those credentials exist and you can put hand to 'em you'll mighty soon find they was forged. So don't you whisper they can't be found."

"And how do you know they was forged?" I asked.

"Because he told me so," answered Joshua. "He came here about Jenny and pitched a tale and I listened, and presently I found the man was far different from what he makes out at Oakshotts. I did a bit of play-acting myself, William, and led him on, and though he was cautious as a rat, I made him think after a bit I was a wrong 'un myself and got his confidence."

"And how did you do that?" I asked. "And why?"

"I did it by holding out against you and saying I'd sooner my gal had him than you; and why I did it was because I had dark suspicions. And you can thank God I had. When he found I was up against Oakshotts and didn't care for nobody there and took a lawless view of life, he came across with it. He's a bad lot and have done time, and he's here for no good whatsoever to Oakshotts. But he's worse than hot stuff, William. He's a dangerous criminal, and he's going to put you out of his path pretty soon as if you was no more than a carrion crow, unless you climb down about my daughter."

"Is he?" I said. "And how does he intend to set about it?"

"I've called you here to tell you," answered Owlet. "Only yesterday he let out his plans and I pretended to applaud 'em. Nobody's easier to wipe out than you, owing to your regular habits, and on Wednesday next, which is his afternoon off, he'll lie behind a hedge for you and do you in. That's as sure as death."

I was a good bit amused to hear this tale.

"And what hedge?" I asked.

"He'll shoot you," said Owlet, "and when you go for your walk, you won't come back. And he'll have his alibi all right and never be suspected, for that matter. He means to get you from the woodstack and be gone like a flash of lightning. I got it out of him by pretending that nothing would suit me better than your death; and I'm telling you, so as you shall either be the hunter instead of the hunted, if you're brave enough for such a job, or else give him up to justice instanter on my word. He's got a army revolver and that he'll use if you don't take the first step yourself."

I looked at Joshua and felt a lot puzzled about his yarn. Fear I did not feel, because them that was in the War know it not in peace. But for a moment my mind was took off Bond by Owlet himself and I couldn't somehow feel his story had the ring of truth about it. In fact I told him so and he swore a barrow-load of oaths that it was only too true.

"I've told you," he said, "and I've worked for you in this matter, Morris, and hid myself and hoodwinked the wily devil till he believed I was with him heart and soul. But if you don't believe me I can do nought. All I say is that the man is well aware how only you stand between him and Jenny, and he'll do you in next Wednesday so sure as you're born, if you don't watch out."

"Never heard nothing so interesting, Joshua," I said, "but whether I believe you or not, I can't be sure. However, fear nought. If I could get through the War, I ain't likely to go down afore this damned rogue. And forewarned is forearmed. I'll keep my weather eye lifting on Wednesday, be sure of that much."

"Have you got a revolver?" he asked.

"I've got my old war revolver," I said, "and it will be in my pocket when I go out for my health."

"I hope your health won't suffer, then," he told me.

I left him after that and went home. Jenny was friendly enough and Tom Bond was so meek and mild that butter wouldn't have melted in his mouth. So the time passed till Wednesday and the footman was off for his afternoon out; and at my usual hour, forbidding Jenny to seek me that afternoon, I went my way. We were quiet for the minute with a week between "guns"

at Oakshotts. A still evening with the reds in the sky and frost promising. My thoughts were difficult, because the more I turned over what Owlet had told me, the more mad it sounded; but I couldn't get any line on Bond and I couldn't get any line on Jenny, though I had a fancy she was pretty miserable and inclining a bit more towards me.



For that walk, however, I concentrated on self-preservation, because if the man really thought to slay me, 'twas up to me to get in first, of course. So I went mighty wary when I came to the trees, and being blessed with amazing good long sight, used it. And I also pricked my ears and had my gun in my pocket and my hand upon it. A shot I heard, but it was dull and far off and didn't sound no ways different from the usual shots you always heard in Oakshotts. Then, after going without any event for half a mile or more, I saw the woodstack ahead on my way, and that minded me of Owlet's warning and the chance it might be true. A very handy place for any man to lie in wait for an enemy on the woodman's path; so I stopped, crept off into the undergrowth and reckoned



"'That Bond is a rogue, William,' Joshua began, and he was terrible excited about his news from the start off."

to come up behind the stack, so as if there was to be any surprises, I'd give 'em. But the surprise was mine notwithstanding. I stalked the stack as cautious as though it had been an elephant, and crept up inch by inch through the laurels with my blood warm and my senses very much alive and my revolver at full cock. And at last I was parted from the danger-point by no more than a screen of leaves. But not a soul I saw, and I was just pushing out with a good bit of relief in my mind, when my eyes fell on the ground and I marked a man lying so still as a snake behind the pile with his head not a yard from the path that ran alongside of it! He was waiting and watching; but he'd not heard me; so there lay Tom Bond sure enough, looking for me to come along; and there stood I behind him not ten yards distant. The dusk was coming down by now and the wind sighing in the naked branches overhead, and I didn't see no use in wasting time. I couldn't have wished to get him in a more awkward position for himself; so I covered

him with my revolver, and I stepped out quick as lightning, and afore he could move, my muzzle was at his ear.

" Now, you damned scoundrel," I said, " the boot is on the other leg, I reckon ! "

But not a muscle of the man twitched, and then I got the horror of my life, for Tom Bond was dead. He lay flat on his face with his hands stretched afore him, and a revolver, the daps of mine, had fallen from his hand and dropped a foot away from it. And, looking close, I saw a big dabble of blood about him, that had come from his body and his mouth.

'Twas a very ugly situation for me, and nobody saw that quicker than what I did ; but I kept my nerve and didn't lift a finger to the man after I was satisfied that not a spark of life remained in him. I said to myself as I ran home that all I could do was to tell naked truth and hope for the best, though at that moment I couldn't fail to see the truth as I told it was bound to look a thought fanciful to the unbiased eye. But I went straight to Sir Walter and gave him word for word, leaving out no item of the story and putting my revolver on his desk for him to guard after he'd heard all.

He was a lot shocked, of course, and awful sorry to lose Tom Bond ; but he believed every word I told him and knew the facts must be exactly as I revealed 'em. Then he sent post-haste for the police and a doctor, and I took 'em to the scene, and men fetched a hurdle and the body of Bond was brought down to the garage and treated with all due respect. The doctor examined him then and found he'd been shot through the back at tolerable close range ; and the ball had gone through heart and lung and killed him instantly. 'Twas dark by now and Dr. James said as how he'd be back with another surgeon next morning. But one mighty strange thing increased my difficulties, because, when we came to hunt for it, the weapon I marked a foot from the dead man's hand was there no longer. And that meant two things. It meant, to me, that somebody had been beside Bond after I left him ; and it meant to the police a tidy big question as to whether my word could be depended upon. Nought was done until the next day and then the inquest was arranged for and a police Inspector spent a long time in my company and finished by telling me straight that I was in a tolerable tight place. We knew each other as friends in Little Silver, but the Inspector—Bassett he was called—felt terrible disposed to arrest me, and only when Sir Walter went bail I wouldn't run away, did he abstain from getting a warrant.

To Joshua Owlet, of course, they went ; but there a shocking thing happened, for the man swore I was lying and that he knew nought about the affair and had never warned me nor nothing like that. He said how Bond had come to him with his tale about loving Jenny, and he'd only told him same as he'd told me, that Jenny's duty would lie with her father and he didn't wish her to marry anybody. So it looked as if the only one who knew the truth must be the dead man, and he was gone beyond recall. They found he'd been shot by an army revolver with a ball of the usual pattern, and more they didn't know ; and when Sir Walter pointed out that my revolver was loaded in all chambers and hadn't been fired, all the police said was I'd had plenty of time to fire it and clean it and load it again afore I gave it to him.

And the next thing that happened to me was that I was locked up, tried afore the justices and committed for trial at the Assizes for the murder of Tom Bond.

Of course nobody who knew me believed such a fearful thing, but seeing how it stood and how the details looked to the public, I didn't blame any for doubting except Joshua Owlet ; and even in my nasty fix I couldn't but admire the devilish craft of that man. Of course I knew from the first he'd done the trick ; and more I knew, because I'd seen his far-reaching reasons and his cunning, to use Bond against me and so plot that we should wipe out each other and leave Jenny free. I could see it all ; and when Sir Walter had one of the big " five " from Scotland Yard to investigate the murder from the beginning, and when that man heard all I'd got to say, he saw it too.

A mean little build of chap, but properly bursting with intellect, was Detective-Inspector Bates ; and after hearing Sir Walter and after hearing me, he never felt no doubt himself about my innocence.

" 'Tis like this," I said. " You can see what Owlet did. He told me Bond meant to take my life ; and no doubt he told Bond I meant to take his life ; and the difference was this. Bond did mean to shoot me that afternoon, doubtless believing that if he didn't, I'd be the death of him later. He could get me when he liked. But I never meant to do more than prove he was a rascal, or satisfy myself that he was not. For the rest, and as to details, only Owlet can tell 'em ; but it's very clear to me he did what

they say I did. He knew where Bond was going to lie for me, and he was there hid afore Bond came and slew him and left him so as it should be shown, as it has been shown, that I slew him. Very like he watched the whole thing and was hid at my elbow somewhere when I found Bond ; and then, after I'd gone, he got Bond's revolver and took it away so as I should be catched in a lie and prove the only one that was armed. And more than that : he may have lent Bond the revolver himself."

I think the Detective Inspector felt very pleased with my view ; and there was another good point for me, because, afore they buried him, they took the dead man's finger-prints and found he'd been in prison before. In fact he was a bad 'un—a " juvenile adult " that had served two years for three burglaries ; and so Owlet had told me a bit of truth mixed up with his lies. But of course poor Bond might have meant to run straight after he fell in love with Jenny, till Owlet tackled him and encouraged him to try and murder me. Nobody will ever know what his game at Oakshotts was, for he died before he'd played it. Anyway, he was gone, and all that mattered to me remained to get my neck out of the noose if it could be done.

And it was done, though more by the act of God than any particular cleverness of man. But, primed with what I'd told him, Mr. Bates got up Owlet's sleeve and, little by little, wormed out the truth. And Owlet, who'd been on the razor edge over the job for a good bit with a mind tottering, lost his nerve at last and gave himself away. He'd got in some queer fashion to believe Bates was his friend and on his side, for these deep detective chaps have a way often to show friendship to them they most suspect ; and so it happened ; for Joshua let it out at last, finding the other knew very near as much about it as he did. And then the " darbies " were on him, and soon after they were off me.

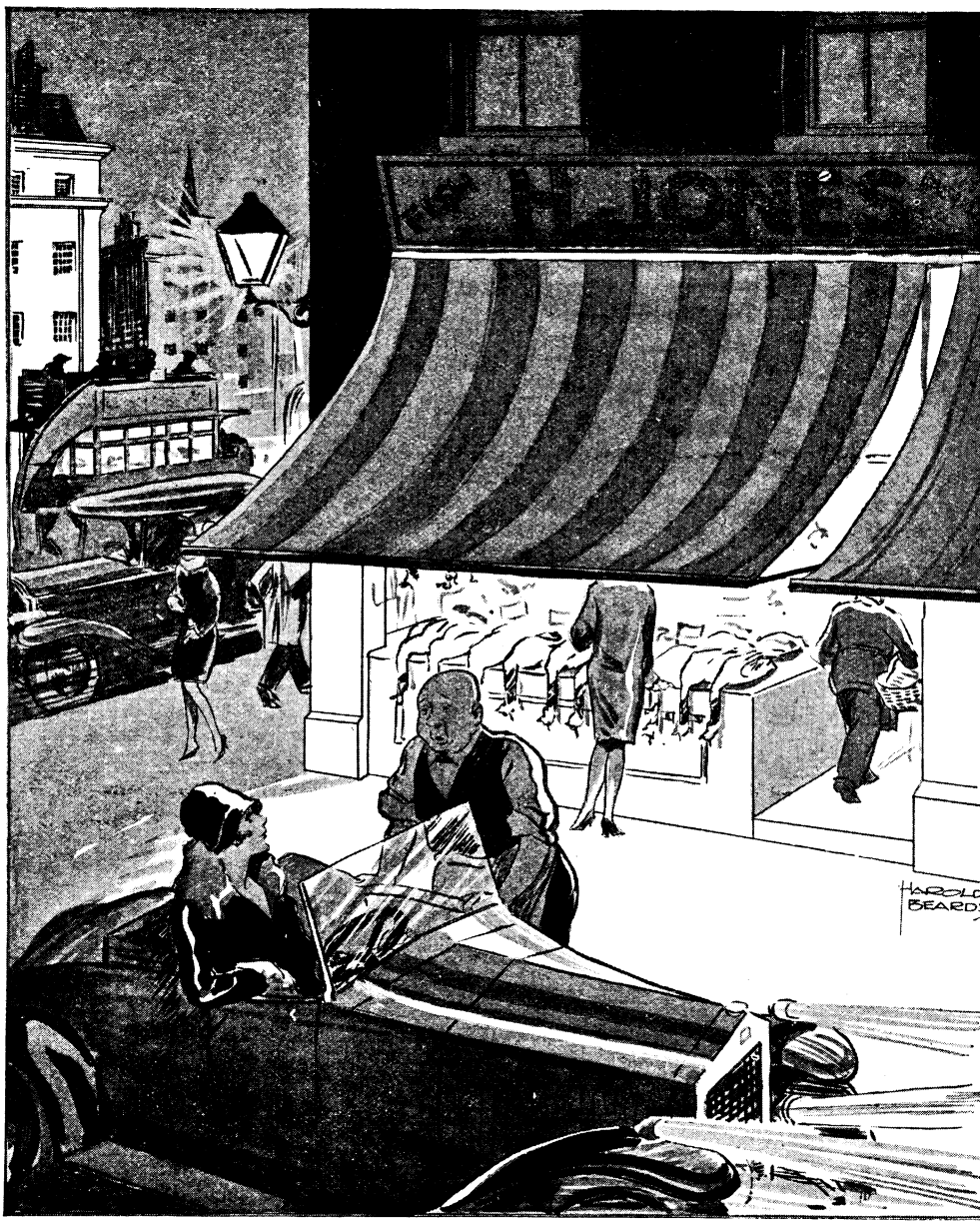
He'd done it with a madman's cleverness, to free his girl and get her back ; and he went to a criminal lunatic asylum for his bit of work and bides there yet. And as for Jenny, I left the rest to her and didn't lift a finger to draw her to me no more. She came, however, and felt the Lord had saved not only me alive, but her also.

For three year we worked at Oakshotts after that, as man and wife ; and then I took my pension and went into Little Silver to live. Because Sir Walter got it into his head to marry again before it was too late ; and his new lady never liked me so well as he did. He'd applauded me far too much to her, and 'tis always a fatal fact in human nature, that if you hear a fellow-creature praised up to the sky, your mind takes an instant set against 'em.

WINTER TREES.

I LOVE a winter tree against the sky.
The clean-cut lines acclaim simplicity,
Despite the woven twigs' complexity,
And Beauty unadorned I there descry.
Nor seems she bold nor coy, ashamed nor shy ;
For chaste is her unconscious nudity—
Her nakedness proclaims her purity.
I love a winter tree against the sky.
Like snow-flake cast upon the velvet moss,
Its crystal flower in perfect shape revealed,
Like lines of force in old age unconcealed,
So in bare trees reigns Beauty without loss.
Would that I might behold my soul thus free,
Outlined in such a chaste austerity.

L. MOULTON.



GOOD EXCUSE.

POULTERER: Er, er, I shall be pleased to receive payment for the—er—turkey, Mrs. Fitz-Simmonds, which I hope was——

MRS. FITZ-SIMMONDS: My husband sprained his wrist so badly carving it that he can't write out your cheque!

LOVE IN THE CIRCUS

By DION CLAYTON CALTHROP

ILLUSTRATED BY S. TRESILIAN

MONSIEUR and Madame Lamballe were two days ahead of their circus. Henri, their eldest son, was acting ring-master for those days at Lorient, and the Lamballes were taking an unusual holiday. It was the month of May, warm and balmy; and although the air was delicately scented by cows, pigs, sheep, chickens, onions and coffee—being market-day—the Lamballes sat content, she over her cassis and syphon, and he with his favourite *Amer Picon*. To them the noise of the hucksters was delicious, drowsy music, music about as good as the circus orchestra, that wild body of men who, dressed in the faded uniform of circus hussars, murdered popular music at two performances per day and became baggage-men when the circus moved.

There was a smile of anticipation on the face of M. Lamballe; he puffed his *papier bleu* cigarette as if he was some Eastern monarch soothing himself with perfumed smoke out of a jewelled hookah.

"My love," he said, "we take our *déjeuner* at the Hôtel des Voyageurs."

Madame, who knitted ceaselessly as if the world depended on her for woollen garments, raised her eyebrows, stopped the clicking of her knitting-needles, and asked mildly, "My love, ought we go?"

"I have a little surprise for you," he replied, watching his wife out of the corner of his eye, "which I shall explain after lunch."

"Why not now?" said she.

"The *déjeuner* to-day," he said dreamily, "consists of *hors d'œuvre*, soup of onions, fresh sardines, lamb cutlets, cold meats, assorted, crême caramel, cheese and dessert. Could princes or leading actors ask for better?"

"I feel hungry already," said Madame Lamballe. "But the cost, Alphonse, the cost."

"And a bottle of good Burgundy, coffee, and a glass of Heaven's gift to the monks and the monks' gift to us—Benedictine."

"It is fifteen years since I tasted Benedictine," she sighed.

"That was at Avignon," said he; "we had a week of good houses. Our luck was in, our dear elephant was still alive. You and I will never forget Maria Thérèsa."

"Never," she replied. "Maria was human."

"She would dust the crumbs of buns from her lips with her lordly trunk," said he.

"Oh, la, la! an exaggeration, my love," said his wife, smiling.

"An elephant is an exaggeration," said he. "And now to *déjeuner*."

Monsieur Lamballe, with the instinct of the theatre which is in every child—and he was but a boy of sixty-five—was wearing Breton clothes: a short black jacket, an embroidered waistcoat, beaver hat, and tight black trousers which met rather perilously over his comfortable paunch.

He threw the waitress fifty centimes with the air of a Grand Duke dispensing largess, raised himself from his chair and, hat in hand, assisted his wife to her feet; her knee-joints were stiff, her breath short, but her face, like his, had the innocence of a child's.

The roar of the market died away as they walked down the steep street towards the river and the lower town.

Those who know the old town of Quimperlé will see the devoted couple treading the narrow streets until at last they reach the broad, swift-flowing river, cross the bridge by the water-mill, and then the square with its avenue of trees, and enter the excellent Hôtel des Voyageurs. Not only on a market-day, but every day, they

will pass girls and old women in big pleated linen collars and clothes of black stuff and velvet: a charming, smiling people, none too rich and few too poor.

Here at a table by a window Monsieur and Madame Lamballe seat themselves. Artemis, the waitress, presents the bread, the *hors d'œuvre,* the bottle of Burgundy on its glass plate, and whisks away to perform a similar office for the other clients.

"My love," says Lamballe, filling his wife's glass three-parts full of wine and the remainder with water, "you have actually forgotten it is your birthday."

Now the good woman had not, but feared her husband might have done so; there had been so many birthdays. "It is best sometimes to forget birthdays," she said.

"My love," said he, raising his glass, "a woman like yourself has no birthdays; you are perennially young as the flowers of Spring. I ask myself——"

"Alphonse," she replied, "there are people listening."

"It will do them good," said he, helping her from every dish. "Where but in our beautiful country does one get such food—eggs, harengs, radishes, sardines, celery, tomatoes! Do you remember our visit to England to see dear Perpetua and the great Brian? Shall I forget the food! My love, you look positively young. Your brooch, imitation but none the less dazzling and massive, I gave you thirty years ago—the sight of it takes thirty years off your age and off mine. You are all eyes, my love, but the great surprise must wait until the coffee."

"I cannot wait," said she.

"Anticipation is the sauce of life," he replied. "We will take our coffee outside."

They ate heartily; the room was full of hearty, albeit noisy, eaters.

Outside, by some tired palms, looking like dusty Eastern slaves, they sat at a little table. Alphonse Lamballe drew from his pocket a slightly broken cigar of an unknown brand which he mended with a cigarette paper. Uranie likened him in her mind to some great financier in fancy dress.

Every now and again her husband took his watch from his pocket and gazed anxiously towards the bridge. At last a motor-car dug out from a museum of automobiles clattered towards them. "Our chariot," said Lamballe. "Enter, my love."

"The extravagance!" she sighed delightedly. "Alphonse, you have been gambling."

"What is life but a gamble?" he replied with a sweeping gesture. "Fate loads the dice and—*parbleu,* I have forgotten the rest."

M. Lamballe had an air of owning the country they passed through, richly wooded country which gave place to little farms and orchards of cider-apple trees. The day being warm, Lamballe ordered the chauffeur to stop at a wayside café where, seated at a little iron table, they partook of white wine and water. Uranie gazed at him in admiration; he had his most lordly air, his most grandiloquent sentences. She glanced at him and thought that he should afford a cream-coloured silk suit and a Panama hat—all he needed to look like a Colonial Colonel on leave.

"Five kilometres more," he said as they left the café, "and we are there."

At last they emerged from the wooded country on to a heath; the arable land melting into the wild gorse and heather; the grey rock standing out in cultivated fields; not far away was the silver gleam of the sea. Standing in a screen of trees was an old low-built Breton farm. Lamballe stopped the car, handed his wife out, and, with outstretched arm, pointed to the place, "Château Lamballe," he said. "Ours."

"My dear, my dear," said Uranie, the tears running down her face. "You are mad; your beautiful reason has deserted you."

"My present to you," he said. "Uranie, my love, Fortune has turned her wheel. My brother Charles, who left forty years ago for Canada, under—shall we say—a cloud, has died. He has left me over one million francs. One million francs. 'To my mountebank brother, Alphonse, one million francs as repayment of the eight hundred francs he once gave me to preserve the family honour.'"

"You never told me," Uranie exclaimed.

"My lips were sealed," said Alphonse grandly, as if he loved having his lips sealed. "My brother slightly disarranged the books of the firm by which he was employed. He was on the point of being found out. He came to me, he wept, he knelt at my feet. I could see the face of my dear mother imploring me—and, behold, the bread I threw on the waters has returned to me."

"The circus, our children, the troupe, the animals," said Uranie. "What of them?"

"Henri was anxious to retain the circus; I gave it to him. We, of course, retain a *loge.* It will be draped with flags of France



"The roar of the market died away as they walked down the steep street towards the river and the lower town."

and Canada. Here, my love, are things to your heart: pigs to yield us pork, cows to yield us milk, hens to yield us eggs, and various farm animals I shall train myself."

Uranie had a sense of the ridiculous. She laughed aloud as she held her husband's hand. The mantle of Agricola had fallen on him and he was already giving a fine impersonation of a gentleman farmer. "He will teach the pigs to spell," she thought, "and the horses to waltz, and the hens to work a swing, and the ducks to shoulder arms. I know he will, the darling."

At the house door they were met by a smiling elderly couple. "Our servants," whispered Alphonse. "They will teach me farming, about which I have already bought a book. The stage directions are a little difficult, but, though the part is long, I shall learn it in a week."

There was a fine paved kitchen, with shining brass and pewter, and Quimper pottery. There was a parlour furnished in the old Breton style, bedrooms; actually a study for Monsieur Lamballe, which he proudly called the "gun-room"—he who had never fired any weapon since his military service but a circus pistol!

Uranie disappeared with the woman, while Alphonse and the man dealt nobly with a jug of cider.

Now this history deals with a circus pistol; the farm and the fortune come into it, but—like Monsieur Lamballe, one must set the First Act, after which the curtain rises on "The Circus."

For many years the bright blue caravans of the Cirque Lamballe had threaded the highways and by-ways of France; they were, in effect, a Blue Train whose stations were market towns. Since Brian and Perpetua had left the circus years before, the company had changed in nearly every case. Two clowns had departed—one to the grave by way of over-much fondness for absinthe, one into retirement to manage a little café at Rennes. Of the new people, the high-trapeze artists were the most interesting. The girl, Roquine, was small, of exquisite figure, dark, of the South. The young man was Irish on his father's side and goodness knows what on his mother's; she was born and bred in a circus, having first seen the light through a hole in a tent. His name was Tim O'Mara, but in circus life he was known as Hirondelle the Swallow, by reason of his sensational dives from the trapeze.

"He is good, that Hirondelle," said Lamballe. "He cleaves the air as I should have done in my youth if Fortune had not sent me into management."

A week or so after his engagement this Hirondelle came to Monsieur Lamballe and suggested a new act. "Roquine and I have thought of a dual performance, Monsieur," he said. "She will swing far out over the heads of the audience, on another trapeze; I shall swing and meet her; in mid-air we will change places; and later, she, hanging from the trapeze, shall catch me by the wrists just as I am about to fall; then, Monsieur, we will do our double act, and, at the firing of a pistol, I will do my swallow dive into the net. What do you say?"

"My dear boy, it is done. I see it. I see the wonder, the expectation of the crowd; I notice, my heart beating wildly, that at the great moment the orchestra, with the exception of the big drum, stops—*brrh!—brrih!—boom!* You crash neatly into the net. Women hide their eyes or peer through their fingers, and brave men wipe the perspiration from their brows. You shall be billed as Les Oiseaux. In a week's time, hey?"

"I am very gratified," said O'Mara.

"An extra ten francs a week," said Lamballe. "I myself will return to the ring to announce it."

O'Mara retired and Lamballe sought his wife. When she had heard all he had to say, she smiled. "Alphonse, my love," she said, "I think Monsieur O'Mara likes to hold the hands of the little girl even in mid-air."

"Ah, woman, woman!" said Lamballe, shaking a finger at her, "you would match a wash-tub with a glazed tile and produce a swimming-bath."

All went well. The act was acclaimed by the public and by the company; indeed, to see the two young lithe bodies, clothed in blue and silver, as they flashed through the air, was a thing of beauty. At one moment they seemed to touch the canvas roof, at another to sweep the sawdust of the ring. But to one man it was bitterness.

Jacques Fauset, a clown, had been chosen to fire the pistol. It was one of those pistols used by conjurers and circus folk, with a wide funnel into which, in the case of the conjurer, handkerchiefs and canaries were stuffed; and in the other case it was used by elephants or performing seals in the finale of their act. It was loaded with small blank cartridge.

Night after night Jacques sat in the gallery and fired the pistol at a given moment; night after night the plaudits rang out as

O'Mara, as if shot, let go the girl's wrists, gave an agile twist, turned a double somersault, and dived straight into the net.

The sight of the two in mid-air preyed on the mind of Jacques, who had fallen deeply in love with Roquine. Jacques was a Breton of the South—indeed, he had been born at La Faoët, near to Quimperlé. His jealousy gnawed at his heart. Always a silent, reserved man, his anger burned slowly; any match would set it blazing. This peculiar man was loved by children and dogs; in the ring, with whitened face and red nose, he could be excruciatingly funny; he had trained a terrier to do almost anything—to play football with him, jump hurdles backwards, and, difficult feat, to stand on its head.

Every now and again he would vanish and get violently drunk, and Lamballe never rebuked him. On these occasions one of the orchestra would fire the pistol; and when Jacques returned, white, with red rims to his eyes, he would take up his part as if nothing had happened. The only person, excepting children, whom he spoke to was Madame Lamballe, and it was she who found out that he was a gentleman, indeed of noble family, who had misspent his youth. After his bouts he never failed to bring a little gift and place it on her table, without a word—some flowers, a packet of nougat, a bunch of coloured knitting-needles. He asked for no more thanks than a pat on the shoulder. And she understood.

At La Faoët, where he had been born, was a château; it stood grim and lonely in the woods, the fields about it were well watered, the cattle well tended. It was now the abode of an American artist who spoke Breton, was liked by the people. Jacques did not exactly hate him, nor did he hate the idea of the man being there; the place was more like a theatrical set piece of his youth, like something that had not quite happened except in a dream; but he brooded over it. It was to this place he turned when he vanished from the circus; here he brought food and bottles of brandy; here he lay in the woods in such a place that he could watch the doings at the château. It was here his melancholy soul found his bitter poetry, sombre as Breton poetry can be: and here he nourished his hatred of O'Mara and dwelt upon his passion for the little trapeze girl.

O'Mara he hated the more because of his Irish kinship with the Breton. O'Mara had the same Celtic lyric hours of joy, the same mystic hours of gloom. The moon affected both of them. That tragedy of dead reflected light swayed their innermost thoughts just as the sun relieved the burden. They both believed in holy wells, in the fires of St. Barbara, in religion, as well as spells and charms.

One evening Jacques came back to the circus in what seemed to be wild good spirits. He dressed himself in his baggy clown's clothes, whitened his face, and made his turn with a swing. He joked with the audience, talked to the children, and was received with tremendous applause.

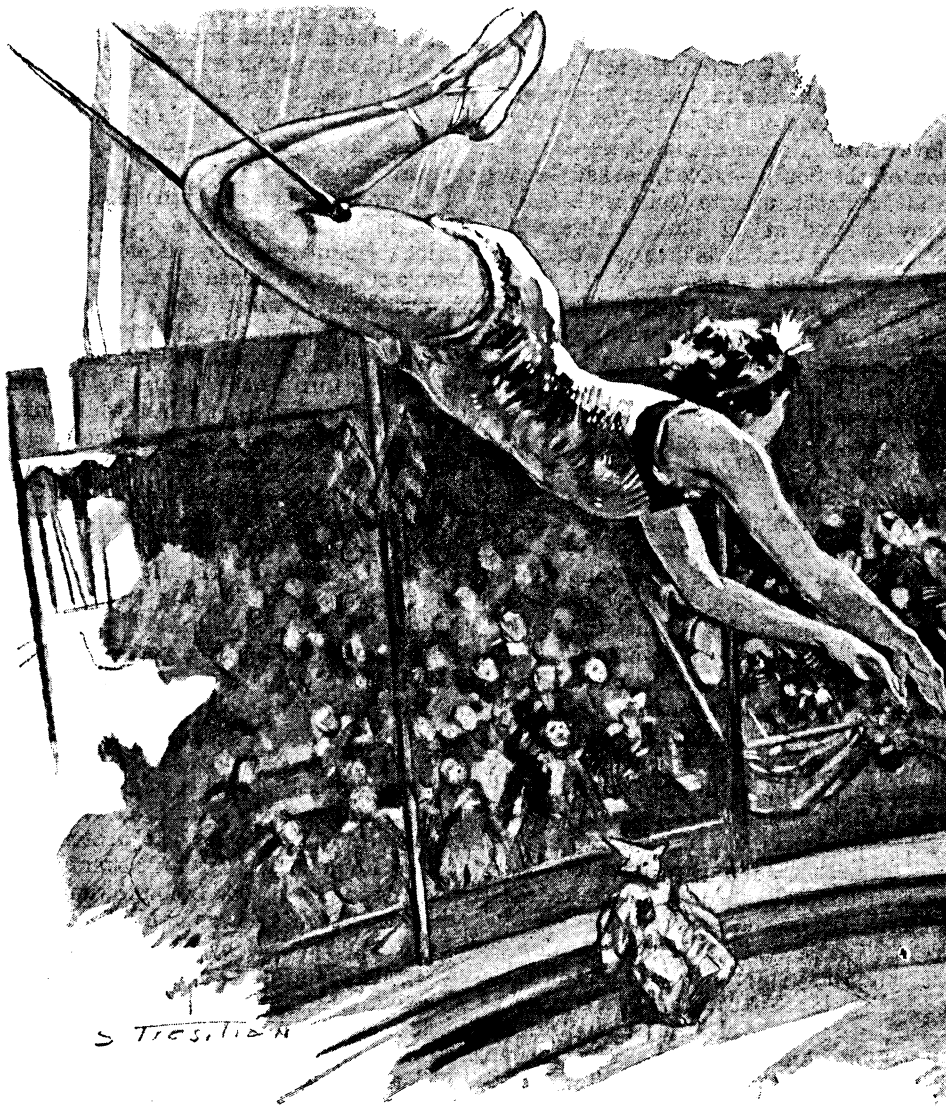
After his turn came Ma'moselle Faustine of the *haute école*, with her white mare "Pansy," and then the trapeze act.

Up the taut rope held by the ring attendants Roquine swarmed to her little perch. She tested the trapeze, smiled at the audience, wiped her hands on a dainty handkerchief, and sent it fluttering down. Jacques ran forward, picked it up and kissed it, to the delight of the crowd. Then O'Mara appeared, and he took his perch on the far side of the ring opposite Roquine. Jacques left the ring and took his seat, pistol in hand, by the orchestra.

They swung, they flew through the air; changing places, they darted to the roof, swung almost to the ground, so it seemed, hanging on by their toes. The great moment came. Roquine, her legs bent over the bar, swung head downward; O'Mara swung, once, twice, three times, let go of his trapeze, and was caught neatly by the hands. They swung together, his face close to hers. "I love you, I love you," he said as they swung, his face close to hers. Her face lit with joy. "Hold fast," he said, as he bent his arms until their faces were on a level, and their lips met for the first time.

The drums rolled, the audience was silent. "Now!" shouted O'Mara. The pistol-shot cracked through the air. O'Mara spun round, twisted in the air, and even as he fell the audience could see the blood spurt from his right arm. He crashed into the net and lay still. Roquine poised for a moment, let go, and landed on the far side of the net. She swayed towards him on the canvas footway. The house was in an uproar.

As the attendants carried O'Mara away, with Roquine by his side, a young doctor ran into the ring and followed them. They passed through a troupe of Arab horses, who snorted uneasily at the smell of blood, and so into the dressing-rooms. Order was restored by the ring-master, who gave out



that there had been a slight accident. The programme went on.

A woman's mind is capricious, greedy, temperamental, logical when occasion demands, but, above all, knows no law. Law harbours moth. Roquine, even in the midst of the excitement, sought for the real cause of the accident, and foresaw the excuse. A loaded cartridge had by accident found its way among the blank. But does not man sometimes anticipate Fate and load the dice? She knew well enough that Jacques loved her. Women of attraction know the sensation of chase; they lay a trail on the high road and skip nimbly by to watch the hounds dart by them. She had a subtle feeling that, deeply as she loved O'Mara, the shot was a compliment to her sex. A woman may prefer one chocolate, but she likes a box.

In the little tent, lamp-illuminated, where O'Mara lay, the local doctor was dressing his arm; he knew as well as the acrobat that what the programme called "The Dive to Death" would never be done again. Once let a high-trapeze man lose his nerve, it will never come back; some of them, as they approach the age when ground-work is their call, drink raw onions crushed into port-wine to steady themselves. It is the beginning of the end.



"The pistol-shot cracked through the air. O'Mara spun round, twisted in the air, and even as he fell the audience could see the blood spurt from his right arm."

Roquine knew less of O'Mara than an apple-blossom knows of its fruit. She worshipped his clean, lithe body, his skill, his unfailing cheerfulness, and his childlike nature.

The lamplight threw fantastic shadows on the side of the tent. The doctor tested, probed the arm, found the bullet, stopped the bleeding with a tourniquet, administered a whiff of something (he had just come from a maternity case), eased the man down on pillows and mattress borrowed from other tents, and left him there, with a word to the girl. "I'll send up a sleeping-draught in a few minutes," he said. "You are his wife, I suppose?"

"Not yet," said Roquine.

He looked at her quizzically for a moment, saw what she had no need to say—"my man"—and left her with instructions.

She shoved the inquisitive crowd out of the tent and settled herself to watch. The face of her beloved became calm and reposeful, the circus orchestra droned on, the oil lamp smelt, but she was in heaven, the nurse in every woman looking at her man and her child.

O'Mara recovered, but his arm was stiff and his nerve had gone.

The world, but for Roquine, was a blank until, one day, Lamballe on one of his daily visits asked him if there was anything else he could do. Madame Lamballe was standing by.

"I know something about gardening and bees," said O'Mara. "I was brought up in the country. But who wants a gardener in this country?"

Madame Lamballe pressed her husband's arm.

"A gardener! Bees!" cried the good Alphonse. "A second Adam! My boy, you know that I, Alphonse Lamballe, have just bought an estate. What do I need so much as a gardener? This is miraculous; this is a heaven-sent accident. A figure is seen bending over the bed of roses a little on the prompt side of the garden; the bees, knowing their master, flock round him. '*Miel de Lamballe*'—think of it—direct from the château to the consumer. You and I, my boy, will tickle the world's sweet tooth and caress its nostrils. There exists actually a cottage; the garden is not too big nor too small. You are engaged; and soon, I hope, we shall see whether we shall behold a little gardener or a tiny acrobat." He winked at his wife, who tried to look shocked, but soon burst into laughter.

"But, Monsieur . . ." O'Mara began stammeringly, "your goodness——"

"Pish and tush!" said Lamballe. "The details we will arrange in my study. We shall make a fortune. I shall very likely go in for making perfume—'Parfum Uranie' will scent the pocket-handkerchiefs of the *salons*. I will furnish the cottage as a wedding present. The entire company will be present at the church. Jacques, by the way, has vanished."

The wedding is still notorious in the annals of the countryside. Both Madame and Monsieur Lamballe shed tears in correct style; the *déjeuner* was prodigious, the wine flowed. Monsieur Lamballe's speech was printed in full, at his own expense, in the local papers.

"Winged like a pheasant in mid-air, our friend drops into the arms of an angel. The golden band on our dear Roquine's finger is an emblem of a divine circus. This little sum of eight hundred francs is a present from the company, and this little sum of one thousand five hundred francs has been collected in the neighbouring towns and villages. Forgive these tears. Bless you, my children."

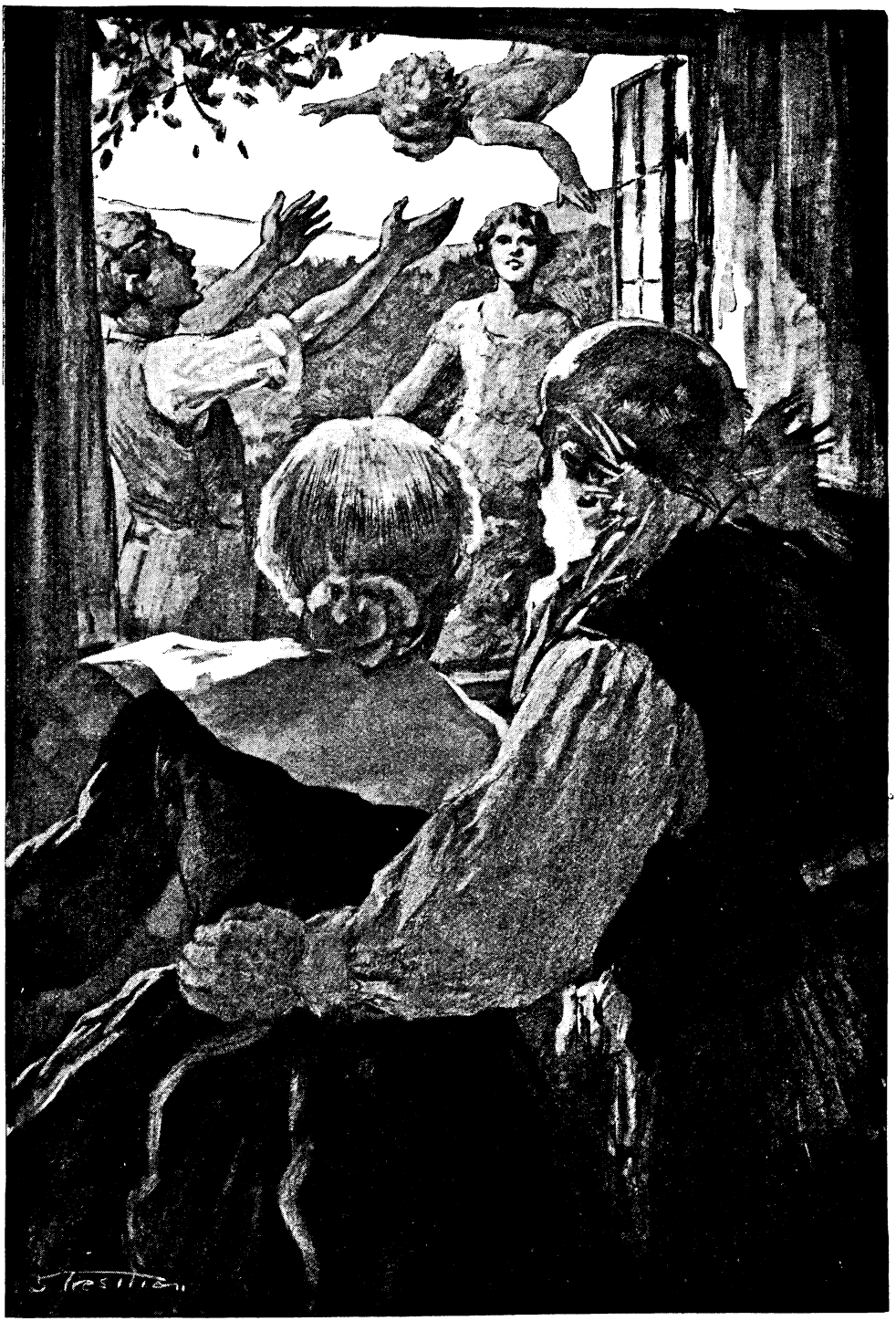
Peace settled down on the happy couple. Flowers grew for O'Mara as they will for the born gardener, and in due course a boy was born to them.

Some four years later Monsieur Lamballe chanced to look out on the garden while he was shaving. He put down his razor, dashed, half covered with soap, to his wife. "Look," he cried—"look out of the window, my love."

High in the air soared the swing on the apple-tree, and on it, head downwards, swung Alphonse O'Mara, clad simply in Nature's birthday garment. O'Mara stood watching his son. "Let go," he called, and the boy leapt through the air into his father's arms.

Lamballe embraced his wife, regardless of his soapy face. A man of words, words failed him. "The young monkey," said his wife. "The sawdust calls," whispered Lamballe; "the tan is in his blood."

Through the air again shot the lithe body, this time to be caught to his mother's breast. Lamballe turned glistening eyes on his wife. "And who says there is no Providence?" he said, crossing himself.



"'The young monkey,' said his wife. 'The sawdust calls,' whispered Lamballe; 'the tan is in his blood.'"

VISIONS at DUSK

By Andrew Soutar

THEY say that Ferney laughed (a real laugh) when he was only ten days old: the Irish nurse insisted, solemnly, that a leprechaun had leaped out of a sunflower and tickled his ribs; so it had. He laughed his way through his schooldays, laughed and fought and "ragged," holding that it was easier to laugh than to whine. Ferney laughed his way through the War—they made him the Mess buffoon: he laughed as his 'plane hurtled through the air, and laughed as he engaged the enemy.

Once, when the other side sent out an "ace" to meet him in combat, the pair fought for half an hour; then the other fellow's ammunition ran out and Ferney's gun jammed. Ferney laughed; the two aviators banked and turned, flew side by side, saluted each other in cavalier fashion and returned to their respective squadrons. Ferney laughed at a forced landing, laughed as he stumbled into a "gas" cloud, and . . . well, they said he would never laugh again. That was a preposterous prophecy.

Ferney—dear "Jimmy" Ferney, whom everybody in the Mess and Club loved—"Jimmy" with the apple-round cheeks and wavy hair, laughed again when his father, Sir Prestwich Ferney, years after the War ended, warned him that if he didn't drop the woman about whom he was making a fool of himself he could go out into the "wide wide" and lose himself. Jimmy laughed because he and little Bueney were already married!

Outside Jimmy's pension the pair hadn't a "bean," but Bueney, who could have made a fricassee out of an old slipper, worshipped the dear lad. She hadn't the foggiest notion of social etiquette, although she was in nowise illiterate; she didn't hanker after a round of pleasure such as a knight's son might be able to furnish; she didn't want to be received into the family—she had quite enough of the joys of life in looking after Jimmy. Perhaps Bueney—the daughter of a tradesman who had retired in the full sense of the word from an active life—realised that she was not a picture which the average connoisseur would care to linger over in the National Portrait Gallery.

In truth, Bueney was plain!

Sometimes she wondered aloud what Jimmy had seen in her to make him want to marry her.

"I'll tell you," he would say, and laugh as he said it: "I've only to close my eyes to turn your mouse-coloured hair into bronze, your little fat fingers into . . . well, I've only to close my eyes and you're anything I choose to make you."

That sort of speech was not typical of Ferney; he employed it only when he was feeling "literary," as he put it. Ferney was addicted to the staccato note: "Hello, Kid! Met the pater to-day. Ha, ha! Gave me the mitt—hard, frozen. I said, 'Cheers, pater!' He said, 'Dam' fool.' Awf'lly good scout, the pater, though. You wait. We'll win. Must win. How are the jolly old 'doings' in the 'Treasury'? Will they run to a trot along Regent Street and a three-and-six, all-in lunch? No? Top-hole! We'll do without it. Let the gourmands 'gour'; we'll be true to our-

selves. Whisk up the cheese and the tin of sardines."

They had a small flat in Notting Hill Gate. Very small. Ferney said that it



"He would tell her stories of his adventures in France; and she would sit at his feet and listen with the mien of a captivated slave."

was made small to suit the convenience of Bueney: she had only to reach across the gas-cooker in the kitchen and the food was in the dining-room. They had only to roll off their chairs after dinner and they were in the bedroom. Bueney laughed with Ferney. He saw everything from the humorous angle. He forgot that he was the son of Sir Prestwich Ferney; he remembered only that he and Bueney had to subsist on the pension. He transformed the cheap little flat into a palace—with his

delightful imagery. He would say: "Shut your eyes, Kiddie! Now, do you see the gilded stairway and the old paintings looking down on you from the walls?" When they hadn't the money to pay for a seat in the theatre, he would tell her stories of his adventures in France; and she would sit at his feet and listen with the mien of a captivated slave.

The more Bueney studied Ferney the more difficult it became for her to understand why he should have married her. She argued with herself that heaps of women in Society would have been only too proud to share his name even if there wasn't anything more material to share. Ferney was so different from all the other men she had met or seen or read about. He wasn't in the least like the hero she had dreamed of in her girlhood, but there was something so compelling about his personality that often she told herself that slavery under him would be a God-given privilege if she were the only slave.

And yet he was far from being an ideal lover: indeed, Ferney might have broken the hearts of a score of women by his seeming indifference on occasion. He was never maudlin: in spite of a literary taint, he professed to despise sentiment; he never indulged heroics, nor in the privacy of their little flat did he ever talk nonsense about loving her devotedly in spite of the disparity between their classes. He never hid from her any of the caustic communications that came from Sir Prestwich: he read them aloud and laughed good-naturedly.

But there were recurring periods when he was very difficult to understand.

While in France, Ferney had made quite a good income by sending articles to the London newspapers and magazines. His outlook was so original that editors who were depressed by the drama out there began to laugh with him—so did their readers. Ferney had been given a public-school education, but his English belonged to the playing-fields and the Mess. Spelling was the last thing he ever considered: slang was his strong suit: "Had a perfectly priceless 'show' last night," he might write. "Mutty and I went up for a 'scrap' after lunch and had the colossal luck to meet two of the gay lads from Richtofen's Number One Touring Company. Mutty was about three over the eight. Result: Took a good one in his ribs but brought his man down as well. So honours were even. We drank to the dear lad at dinner that night."

The editors would publish any amount of this sort of stuff from Ferney because he gave them the impression that war was just a jolly old holiday for most of the boys: he brightened up the readers amazingly: they didn't care a hang about his slang. He wrote as he talked—a laugh in his eyes, a joke on his lips. Sometimes, in describing an affair out there, he would employ the language of the Rugger player and the reader didn't know whether to sob or to tackle a policeman on point duty.

It was long after Ferney retired from his uniform that he conceived the idea of living on the fruits of his brain. He confessed to Bueney that they might get abnormally thin during the process, but he couldn't think of any other profession that might help them. He knew a little about motoring, but he rather funked the idea of applying for a chauffeur's job: he said he would have to drive fat old ladies around the Park and guard their pet dogs while they were shopping. Bueney said to him:

"You could do anything if you tried."

"Don't be an ass—I couldn't," he replied with perfect candour. "The guv'nor knows that better than I do."

Bueney didn't begin to cry because she had placed a barrier between him and his family. She said:

"I'm going to make you try." Then she hauled a book from the shelf and put it into his hand. He would read aloud while she sat at his feet and listened.

Or it might be that she would play to him on the imitation piano they hired by the month. Nothing classical, mark you, for Bueney didn't know the difference between Wagner and a Camembert cheese. Ferney preferred—*said* he preferred, the homely stuff such as "Widdicombe Fair," or "The Blind Ploughman," or a snatch of jazz—"just as much as you can remember, old girl, and let her go."

One night, after he had been reading, he glanced down and seemed rather annoyed that her eyes should be shining suspiciously. He positively hated sentiment, he reminded her.

She smiled up at him and said: "I was only thinking how good it is to be here when I might be slaving my heart out for somebody who didn't care a rap for me."

He didn't reply to that remark. He

stared at her critically, shook his head and sighed:

"Damme, that nose of yours turns up more every day: I must get you one of those patent straighteners when I can afford it."

Bueney reverted to type. A challenge took the place of the tears in her eyes.

"I've never turned my nose up at anything that had to be done for you—have I?" she asked.

Reflecting on all the embarrassing predicaments which the effects of "gas" may have on a man long after the incurring, he admitted quite frankly that she had been a splendid nurse. To himself, however, he admitted that she had been little else. There had been nights of hallucinations when he fancied all the horrors of years ago were beginning again. He had laughed at them at the time of the actual happening, but it was different now. Bueney had to suffer with him. She had fought with him when he was wrestling with an imaginary enemy, clung to him when he was "banking," or "zooming" to get under the tail of the other fellow's "'plane."

"I know you could have got lots better than me," said Bueney, and he didn't even flinch from her grammar, since it was generally as passable as his own, "but would they have done as much for you?"

"Probably not, Bueney," said he. "But why quarrel about it? One doesn't quarrel with one's nurse, old girl. Just pay the fee and demand the service. That's the 'get-out,' as our friends across the water say so succinctly." And before she could make the obvious retort he added: "I know that I haven't paid much of a fee, but the long hard road is beginning to reveal the bend, if you get what I mean."

And Bueney said, half to herself: "You could have paid me all I ever wanted if you'd liked."

He knew what was in her mind, but he murmured to himself that he had never been demonstrative. If he had placed one finger under that chin of hers and tilted the snub nose a fraction higher and touched her lips or cheek with his lips she would have been more amply repaid than a million trained nurses. He said:

"I vowed not to borrow from anybody, and I am a regular St. Antony when it comes to making a vow. Didn't I vow not to let you down when they tried to kick against our marriage? I'm going to repay you for all you've done for me, Bueney, but I shall do it in my own good time. That's how the wise lads talk, but interpreted it means that when the 'zero hour' comes you shall be the first creditor to be remembered."

"What are you going to use for 'dough'?" she asked. "Shells?"

"I've written a play," said Ferney.

"Anybody can do that," she said. "Learn how to write a cheque and it'll get you somewhere. . . . Take my brother Joe . . ."

"Ah! Your brother Joe! How's the good old scout?"

"He ain't no scout. You've never seen him. He's a builder."

"And a thundering good trade too, if you know how to fool the inspector. You know—four and a half inch brick walls instead of the regulation nine, and fifty quid in the accommodating lad's hand."

"He's an honest builder. Went out to Canada after the War—and he wasn't an officer, neither—and he made good."

"They all make good who drift to Canada," said Ferney. "And they all write home for money."

"Going to put that in your play—ain't you?"

"Why not, old thing? The truth hurts a modern audience. Now, what about Joe, your brother?"

"He's here in England."

"Well? Has he given you the glad hand?"

"He said that if—if I wasn't wanted here, I could have a good place in his house out there."

Ferney was silent for a moment.

"That's something worth knowing—isn't it?" he said at last. "Want to go, Bueney?"

"If I thought I wasn't wanted here," she replied. "Why not?"

Ferney wasn't convinced.

"Do you mean that if you felt there was any urge to sever the partnership, so to speak, you wouldn't kick up a fuss? Divorce and that sort of thing?"

"I'd go out of that door," said Bueney, with dignity, "and you wouldn't hear from me again. I'm not the sort——"

"You mean my sort. My—my old acquaintances?"

"I'm not the sort to stay if I ain't wanted."

"Bueney! 'If I am not wanted.' That sounds better, and I have a 'hunch' that it's better English."

"Not having one of your 'turns,' are you?" she asked solicitously.

"Not likely," he said, and laughed. "I'm getting tired of the old 'turns': think I'd better go in for a new one."

"There can't be any new ones," said Bueney with a sigh. "You've had them all." She tapped his knee thoughtfully. "Wish I hadn't poked fun at you just now," she said. "About that play, I mean. You could do it if you tried. Would you make much money?"

"They always make a fortune with a first play," said Ferney. "Then, they go on the loose and squander it. Or get tired of their women-folk and——"

"I wouldn't write it if I were you," said Bueney, naïvely.

"Bueney," said he, "George Washington was a Borstal boy compared with me. I can't tell a lie. I have already written the play and it is going to be produced."

And without allowing her to comment on the achievement he went on: "Has Brother Joe got more than an acre, a cow and a mortgage?"

"He has two hundred acres," she said, "and he'll get more than that 'cause he has his health and strength to carry on."

"Stout fellow!" said Ferney, and lapsed into another of those eloquent silences.

She knew he was thinking of his own broken health, and instantly she sought to retract her hasty words. He only smiled and nodded, forgivingly.

Now, it was quite true that Ferney had managed to break down the managerial barriers and sell a play. It might be a failure: it might be a success. He didn't very much care: it was enough for him that he had accomplished something in defiance of the prophecies of those who had insisted that he was finished and deserved his fate for not having greater regard for the social position of his father.

The newspapers announced the forthcoming production and there were all kinds of references to his war service and his father and his "romance," as it was termed. This had reference to his marriage to Bueney.

The reaction on Bueney of this promised change in their financial position was rather perplexing. She became morose, even suspicious. That flippant reference to "getting tired of their women-folk when they've made a fortune" had entrenched itself in her brain. He appeared to have forgotten it the moment after it was made.

Rehearsals began, and he took her along with him to sit near him. She fancied he did it in order to "wean" her, as she put it to herself. He was already contemplating the day when his bank balance would allow of his rectifying the mistake he had made in marrying. Her mind was made unduly active and imaginative. She noticed that after they left the Underground on their way to the theatre he got into the habit of pinching her as they walked along: they had never walked arm-in-arm. It wasn't a sly pinch: it was as though he had reached up to her sleeve to direct her through the traffic and had picked up too much of the material. She made no violent protest.

Then came the night when the play was produced. To her chagrin he informed her at luncheon that it wasn't his intention to be present.

"But I want you to go," he said. "In fact, I've fixed it up with the manager. Box to yourself, unless you care to take a friend."

"Haven't any friends," she said, and looked hard at him.

"How about Brother Joe?" said Ferney. "If you know his address. Topping idea! Take him along—in his corduroys, tied just under the knee, wisp of straw in his mouth, and . . . Oh, baby! What a sensation for the newspapers to-morrow!"

She crushed back a sob and leaned over his chair.

"Jimmy," she said, "I let you out of my sight for five minutes this morning. What did you do? What did you have?"

"Just a 'spot,'" said Jimmy. "Maybe a couple. But why shouldn't I? If I should meet an old friend why shouldn't I accept his homage?"

"Homage, Jimmy? Getting conceited before the 'show' starts?"

He urged her away from him.

"That's it," he said, petulant for the first time since she had known him. "Fling the cold water over me. Tell me it's bound to be a failure."

She turned away from him as she said: "There's some reason why you want me to go alone to-night."

"Frankly," said he, "there is. The pater wrote me to say he would like to come along. I haven't seen him for moons."

Bueney said rather plaintively: "I'd like to stay with you, Jimmy." And her lips trembled.

"I'd prefer you to go," he replied.

"Who's to tell me the truth about the show if you don't?"

"As you will, Jimmy. But will you be all right without me?"

"I shan't move out of this flat. Of course, it isn't likely that you would understand an author's sensitiveness on a first night. They might heave cabbages at me."

"I'd kill them if they did," said Bueney.

He waved a hand to stay further heroics. She understood that.

"Spend a couple of coppers and 'phone Brother Joe," said Ferney. "He'll like the affair."

She shook her head.

"I'd rather go alone," she said solemnly. "I can think better when I'm alone."

And she did go alone, after leaving everything ready to his hand. Not a detail did she over-look, even to placing a box of matches near the gas stove so that he could boil the kettle if he should want coffee before she returned. It was all very unreal to her—not a bit romantic. All she realised was that Ferney had changed: his new fortune had changed him: he was anxious to get rid of her. For the first time he hadn't allowed her to learn the contents of his father's letter. She wondered what might be the new proposition from that quarter.

The play began at eight-thirty. At nine o'clock Ferney got to a telephone box and made certain that Bueney was in the theatre: the manager said she was carried away by the play. So was the house! Then Ferney went back and waited—not for Sir Prestwich, but for Brother Joe! Ferney had lied to Bueney: the letter he had received was from her brother!

He arrived at the appointed time. Ferney admitted him and went back rather slowly to his chair.

"You got my note?" he said, as he sat down.

"You bet," said Joe, and accepted the chair indicated. "So! You're the guy she married! Oh, Gee!"

"Steady!" said Ferney. "I'm not taking that sort of thing from you. I asked you to come here to talk over a matter of importance."

Brother Joe was big enough and strong enough to pull one of his own ploughs across a five-acre field. His clenched hands relaxed as he looked at Ferney.

"'Shoot,'" said he. "Let me have the low-down. Remember she's my sister—that's all. I know she married into a set that's supposed to be above her, but times have changed, old son. We Canadians don't judge men by what their fathers were. Bite on that."

"I'm biting on quite a lot to-night," said Ferney. "You spoke that elegant mouthful of yours when you remarked that she married above her. I feel she would be much happier if—if—— Now, how the devil can I put it?"

"If she went back to Canada with me, I suppose," said Brother Joe.

"Exactly, old fruit," said Ferney, and shaded his eyes with his hand as though the glare of the fire offended him. "I wish her to go, but I'm ready to finance her, as it were."

"None of that," said Brother Joe. "I've got money. I made it honestly—with my hands."

"I, too, have money, now," said Ferney, wholly unabashed. "I made it—not quite so honestly, perhaps—with my brains. I want to get back to my beginnings. That's frank—what?"

"You're tired of the kid?"

"Don't be so terse," said Ferney.

"You're not tired of using her as a slave?" said Brother Joe. "She ain't been much else since she married you."

Ferney was terribly business-like.

"I'm ready to pay," he said. "In fact, I have already made arrangements for the payment."

Brother Joe looked around the small room and smiled cynically.

"The piano won't fetch much," he mused.

Ferney laughed—that old laugh of his.

"I must come out to God's Own Country," he said, "and get the right idea of humour. . . . This play of mine is bound to be a success. But what have I done?"

"Made it up with your people, I suppose," said the big man. "And after she's given the best years of her life to you!"

Ferney squirmed a little. Brother Joe went on in a bitter, taunting tone:

"Is there anything she hasn't done for you since you came back 'crocked'? I know she isn't a high-born lady with a face like——"

"Shall we leave her face out of the question?" said Ferney peevishly. "I have so much to say and you try to put it out of my head. I realise the position: I know that she has been a thundering good little scout. But I want the break to come painlessly, or rather, I want to let her down as lightly as possible. . . . She ought to

have a comfortable time out in Canada, Brother Joe—what?"

Brother Joe sneered openly.

"She'd have to work a bit," he said, "but it wouldn't be half as hard a time as she's had with you—sitting up all night and swabbing your head, scratching around like a busy hen for the best grub your few pounds could buy so's your inside might . . . Oh, you give me a pain!"

"Exactly, Brother Joe," Ferney was very calm and rational. "She has had a rough time, and I would like to think that there was some sort of reward for her. In fact, I can't bear to contemplate her having to—to carry on with the slavery, as you call it."

"Punk!" said Brother Joe. "I suppose your people have clubbed together to pay the 'debt'?"

"No," said Ferney. "Believe my word this time, will you? I have decided to do it myself. Why should I fall back on them now that they are showing so much kindness in other directions? I have sold three-quarters of my interest in this play,



"'Made it up with your people, I suppose,' said the big man. 'And after she's given the best years of her life to you!'"

and a sum of at least two thousand will be handed to you, in behalf of Bueney,



within the next few days. That's playing the game—what? But you must agree to get her away. Moreover, I would like you to tell her about this when I'm not present."

Bueney returned from the theatre an hour after Brother Joe had taken his leave. She began by saying the atmosphere in the room was horribly stuffy.

"Yes," said Ferney. "Almost sulphurous. How did the 'show' go?"

The "show" was a success. She told him of a cheering audience, of cries for the author, of a management as effervescent as a glass of champagne, of . . . oh, she poured it out in a torrent. And Ferney merely smiled down his nose conceitedly.

"You don't seem proud," she said wonderingly, "but I'm awfully proud of you."

"So are my people," he said cryptically, and instantly all the light went out of her eyes. She looked about the room as if searching for evidences of Sir Prestwich's visit.

She dared to question him about what had happened during her absence, but he assured her that she wouldn't understand if he told her. He was rude in his attitude towards her, appeared to resent her near presence to him, and finally insisted that he was too tired to sit up and talk about matters that were purely "family" matters.

During the night he heard her sobbing, but he wasn't inclined to comfort her: he pretended not to have heard. The blow had to come, he reasoned, and it would be foolish to intensify it by playing the hypocrite now.

Next morning there was a pile of telegrams on the breakfast-table. Managers wanted to get into touch with him, newspapers wished to interview him. Ferney allowed her to open the envelopes: he had anticipated all this, and his lips were turned back in derision.

"I haven't any intention of writing another play," he said. "I don't want their flattery. Moreover, I don't want their money after they have paid for this." He added, without looking up from his plate, that his people were quite capable of making him an allowance. And why shouldn't they?

That was the blow in the face for which she had been waiting. So, there had been a reconciliation!

"Drat your people," said Bueney. "You'll want me before you want them. They'll never understand you as I have."

"Let us drop the subject," he said curtly.

From that moment until four in the afternoon he didn't utter another word beyond saying that he had letters to write and mustn't be disturbed. There was a small writing-desk in the spare bedroom of the flat; he remained there right up to ten minutes to four. Bueney was now convinced that a battle was imminent: she could hear the thundering of the guns. But she wasn't a coward. Not with the intention of provoking him while he was writing letters, but with a sense of loyalty to her own dignity, she played on the cracked piano, even sang. And she didn't take the trouble to inquire of him if he desired lunch. Let him go out with his new-found friends to some swell place. She didn't care. But she left half of the tin of lobster for him, all the same, saying that if he were hungry he could help himself later in the day.

At four o'clock he went out for a walk. She made no protest or comment beyond this: "All right, but don't be surprised if I'm out when you come back."

She didn't go to the door of the flat as was her habit, therefore she didn't see him *feeling* for the lift bell. She did glance out of the window and see him get into a taxi. She thought he did it rather awkwardly, and instantly her suspicions were aroused. Had success swerved him towards drink? She went into the spare bedroom to search for the bottles that might be there. Funny, she said to herself, that she had never dreamed of his giving way to dissipation in secret. There were no bottles. There was no evidence of his having written a single letter. On the writing-pad there were a number of meaningless scrawls.

Brother Joe arrived at the flat soon after four. He told her of all that had happened on the previous evening.

"He wants to get rid of you," said he. "That's the blunt truth. But, by Heaven! you're my sister, and if you don't show him that you've as much pride as he has I'll never speak to you again."

"I have—and more," said Bueney, but there was a break in her voice. "I don't want his money."

"I'll see you don't take it," said Brother Joe.

Ferney returned at seven, when it was dusk. She heard him lumbering along the corridor after leaving the lift, heard him fumbling with his key. He had been out with the friends who meant more to him than she did. He was unsteady in his walk as he came across the floor. He laughed foolishly as he sank down in a chair.

"How're things?" he asked in an idiotic tone of voice.

"You ought to know," she said. She waited for him to ask if Brother Joe had told her the news. She said to herself that it was part of her dignity to pretend that she wasn't upset by the turn of affairs. Let Ferney start the battle, then she would go in and fight.

He sat before the fire for half an hour; then he said with startling suddenness:

"Everybody's talking about the play. Know what I'd like to do? Go for a walk.

Walk past the theatre. See my name there. What ? "

" There's the door ? " she said bluntly.

" I'd like you to go with me," said Ferney.

Ah ! He hadn't the courage to tell her in the quiet of the flat. He wanted to tell her in the open of the street, so that she might not have the chance to rail against him ; then, maybe, he would steal away to his people.

She smiled contemptuously as she said : " I'm ready when you are."

They went. They walked down the Haymarket. They halted before the theatre. She expected him to go inside, but he muttered that he didn't care to meet them that night. She told herself that he was ashamed—ashamed of his companion. There was a throng of pedestrians on the pavement. In some way she was hustled from his side and when she regained her place it was to find him in the grasp of a policeman. An indignant woman was explaining what had happened.

Ferney, the fool, had deliberately *pinched* the woman's arm !

And he was laughing—laughing like one half crazed by wine. The policeman was inquiring his name.

" He's my husband," said Bueney. " You leave him to me." She would have fought half London if they had dared to take him into custody.

And the policeman actually handed him over to her care. " You take him home," he said, and shook his head pityingly.

They hailed a taxi. Ferney was laughing —the old, old laugh that used to melt the heart of the C.O. towards him in the great days when he had sinned against King's Regulations.

" Carrying a ' load '—aren't you ? " said Bueney in the semi-darkness of the taxi. " Your friends *are* friends. They'll look after you all right when I'm gone."

He stayed his chuckling.

" Brother Joe has told you ? "

" Yes. Did you think it was likely to break my heart ? "

" You might have had it broken if you'd refused to go. Life is life, old girl. We must take the rough with the smooth."

She helped him up the stairs to the flat because she didn't want to let the lift-man see him " in that condition." She pushed him rather roughly into an arm-chair in front of the fire and said : " Sleep it off." He didn't reply—just stared at the fire. She stepped back and regarded him with contempt.

" Wouldn't papa like to see his darling boy, now ? " she said.

Ferney laughed the old laugh.

It provoked her.

" Thank God," she said, " for the clean winds and the clean wheat-belt of Canada and the clean men who ain't afraid of hard work."

He made no reply.

" Two thousand pounds for me ! Eh ! " She had turned away from his chair. " Keep it," she said. " You'll need it for your friends when I'm gone."

He might not have heard her.

" I say, old girl," he said, " how about a little spanking of the ivories ? Give's a tune."

A mood of devilishness possessed her.

" Sure," she said. " It's the last night in the old ' billet.' Let's have a jazz."

He didn't turn to look at her—kept staring into the fire.

She sat down at the cracked piano and began to hammer on the keys. " Are we down-hearted ? " she cried. " No "—answering her own question. And all the idiotic melodies she could remember were ground out the while she sang in a silly voice that was very near to a sob.

" Now, what'll you have, old son, before you take the high road and I take the low road ? "

And still he didn't turn in his chair to look at her. His back was turned to her back ; her hands were resting on the yellow ivories.

" There's one thing I'd like you to play before you go," he said.

" ' Shoot,' kid—' shoot ! ' " She laughed, and laughing made the tears run down her cheeks. " How about ' The Gypsy's Warning ' ? "

He was very silent for a second or two.

" Play ' The Blind Ploughman,' " he said. " It's a favourite of mine."

Without knowing why, she struck the opening chords. Without knowing why, there was nothing ludicrous to her in the suggestion he had made. Without knowing why, she forgot his friends who had given him the " load " of wine. It was when she came to the lines :

> " God took away my eyes,
> That my soul might see." . . .

It was when she came to those lines—when she had sung them in her poor, thin

voice, that she stopped as a lightning flash of understanding struck her brain. She sprang from the cheap, leather-covered piano-stool and turned to look at him. He was staring at the fire. She cried out:

"Jimmy! Oh, Jimmy!"

He didn't move—still stared at the fire.

She crept around the chair and knelt down, looking up into his face.

The tears were running down his cheeks. Yes, down the cheeks of dear old Ferney who had laughed his way through life.

"Blind!" she said in a whisper.

"For a little while," said Jimmy. "Perhaps for always, and—and you've slaved so long that it isn't fair to you——"

"Fair to me?" She reached up and pressed her hands to his cheeks. She drew his head nearer to hers. "Blind! You knew it was coming! Blind! You've been pretending. You were ready to let me go so's there wouldn't be any more slaving. Pretended that you wanted to go back to your people?"

He did not speak for a moment. Then he said:

"I thought I was braver than I am. I thought I could stick the darkness without having you wear out your heart and soul looking after me. You've done so much and I've never really thanked you."

"We've been through some rough times, Jimmy."

"Pretty rough, old girl."

"Nothing to look at—am I?"

"Wish you could see what I can see now," he said. And his sightless eyes seemed to her to glow with a great joy. He might have been gazing on some wondrous vision.

"Jimmy!"

"Kid?"

"There *is* hope?"

"So they say; but is it fair?"

"To you?"

"No, to you."

"Jimmy, who on earth will look after you if I don't?"

"Brother Joe," said Ferney, and his cheeks were wet.

"Let Brother Joe go back to Canada," said Bueney. "Oh, big lad, why didn't you let me know the truth?"

"Kid, that's a great song, isn't it?—'The Blind Ploughman.'"

"Why, Jimmy?"

"Don't ask me," said Ferney, and there was a laugh weaving its way through *his* sobs now. "'That my soul might see.' Guess I can see, *now*! Bueney! Wish I could find your lips, but there are too many tears about."

"Jimmy?"

"Kid?"

"Just here!" she said, and rested her face against his.

A VESPER

FOR A TIRED SOUL.

WHEN I have done what I can,
And can do no more,
A worn itinerant man
I come to Thy door;
Not to offer my wares
As poor pedlars do,
A pack of fugitive prayers
And a dream or two;
Nor to lay down my load
As the homeless may
Who come to the end of the road
At the end of the day;
Neither for food, nor for pence;
Yet I come to Thee
Just for the comforting sense
Of Thy company.

FAY INCHFAWN.



EYES AND NO EYES.

SHE: You're extraordinarily unobservant!

HE: Oh, I don't know. I've counted twenty-one berries on that bunch of mistletoe.

HIS CAREER

By RICHMAL CROMPTON

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

THE boy had decided to be an actor. Till now he'd taken for granted, like everyone else, that he was going into his father's office, but now, quite suddenly, he had decided that that was a soulless and materialistic career, unworthy of him.

His decision was partly influenced by a book he had lately read in which the hero had refused to go into his father's office, had been disowned by the father, had starved in an attic for a few months and had then been acknowledged by the whole world as the most famous artist of the age. The father had come to him to beg his forgiveness and also to borrow money because his business was doing rather badly. The famous artist lent him money and accepted his apologies with generous if slightly cynical graciousness. There was also a very beautiful girl in the story who believed in the artist from the beginning, was his inspiration while he was starving in the garret and fell into his arms with a glorious blush on the last page.

The story made the boy feel ashamed of his tameness in having meekly acquiesced all his life in the prospect of going into his father's office when he left college. It had been, he knew now, unworthy of him. No man of spirit would ever have dreamed of it. No hero had ever been known to go meekly into his father's office. No, the boy had quite firmly and finally made up his mind. He wouldn't go into his father's office. He'd be an artist. He'd go and starve in a garret where a beautiful girl should inspire him and believe in him and then finally he'd emerge from the garret as a famous artist recognised by the whole world. He'd have a beautiful house in the country rather like Hampton Court and people would come from far and near in charabancs just to try to get a glimpse of him walking in his grounds.

The only flaw to all this was that the boy couldn't draw for nuts and knew that he couldn't draw for nuts. He'd never got any marks for drawing at school and he couldn't help feeling that people didn't suddenly develop a genius for drawing at his advanced age (he was seventeen) after having been a dud at it all their lives. There was the author's career, of course. It would be just as noble to spurn his father's office and retire to the garret to starve and write immortal poetry or stories or plays. Fame would come in just the same way, ending in Hampton Court and the charabancs. It could all be just as noble and dramatic. But here again the boy was up against a difficulty. He couldn't write poetry. Even with the help of a rhyming dictionary he couldn't write poetry. He knew he couldn't because he'd tried. He couldn't write stories either. He'd tried that too. He'd once written one for the school magazine and they hadn't put it in. . . . It was disappointing to have strung himself up like this to spurn his father's offer of work in his office in order to slave in a garret and finally achieve fame and then not to be able to think of anything he could achieve fame in. The boy was secretly much worried by it. He ought to make up his mind quickly. He'd only two years and two terms left of his college course and he ought to have made up his mind by now what to do. Certainly after reading that book he felt that he couldn't go into his father's office. The boy liked to see himself in a heroic light and he knew that he'd never be able to see himself in a heroic light now if he went into his father's office. Not after reading that book.

Then—it was extraordinary that he hadn't thought of it before—he went to the theatre one evening because he'd nothing else to do, and the whole thing became clear. Of course that was the solution. He'd be an actor. You could starve in a garret as an actor just as well as if you were an artist or an author. And you could achieve fame —Hampton Court and the charabancs—as suddenly and as completely. And of course the beautiful girl could believe in you and inspire you and fall into your arms with a

glorious blush at the end in just the same way.

The play that he saw was *Hamlet*, and the character of Hamlet happened to be played by a young actor who had only lately come to the fore in the theatrical world. He was tall and handsome and possessed the tragic manner to perfection.

The boy leaned forward from his seat in the back row of the gallery and watched him ardently. But of course he wasn't the boy sitting on the back row of the gallery. He was the actor playing Hamlet. He was tall and handsome with the perfect tragic manner. He paced the stage, he threw out his arms in eloquent gestures, he raised and lowered his beautiful voice impressively. All these hundreds of people were watching him, listening to him with eager interest and admiration. At the end of the play a storm of applause burst out. Someone threw flowers on to the stage. The boy wasn't in the gallery, being jostled by his neighbours, who were bending down to pick up their sticks and umbrellas. He was standing alone on the stage, bowing his thanks, disappearing, being recalled, bowing again and again. He stumbled down the stairs and out of the gallery door into the street, his face pale and tense from his triumph.

After that there was no doubt in his mind at all. He was going to be a famous actor. When next his father mentioned his going into his office, he'd tell him quite firmly that he wasn't going into it. He ought to be looking out for that garret. He didn't think he wanted to finish his college course. It worried the boy to think how his life was slipping by without his having *done* anything with it. He was seventeen. It was time he was beginning to *do* something with his life. That night he took a copy of *Hamlet* up to his bedroom and read all of Hamlet's speeches aloud and with appropriate gestures. He couldn't help thinking that he did it quite as well as the famous actor, especially the "To be or not to be." He couldn't finish the last Act because his eldest sister, whose bedroom was next to his, knocked on the wall. Though annoyed by this interruption, still the boy found a certain pleasure in it. All the geniuses of whom he had ever heard had been unappreciated by their immediate family circle.

The next day he learnt several of the longer speeches of Hamlet by heart and declaimed them alone in his bedroom. He couldn't help thinking that if any great actor-manager had heard and seen him he wouldn't have had to wait very long for fame. The garret stage would have been eliminated altogether. Not that the boy was particularly desirous of that. He wanted the garret stage left in. He didn't believe that anyone could be really great who hadn't at one time starved in a garret. He felt slightly self-conscious with his friends and acquaintances for the next few days. He couldn't help seeing himself as they'd see him in their memories when they looked back in later years. For instance, there was that Mrs. Martin, a friend of his mother's, who so completely ignored him. "Yes," he could hear her saying, "I remember him well. A quiet, unassuming boy. Yet even then I remember thinking that there was *something* about him . . ." Then there was that man who lived next door who complained about his motor-cycle and his whistling and who had been so objectionable that time when he'd been practising golf in the garden and one of his balls had gone over the fence and broken a pane of glass in his greenhouse. "Yes," he could hear him saying, "I remember him well. I only wish I could have those days over again. I didn't appreciate him then of course. I looked upon him as just an ordinary boy. I missed the opportunity of getting to know him then and of course it's too late now. But looking back I can see that even then there was *something* about him. . . ." Then of course there was his eldest sister. She'd wish, among other things, she hadn't knocked on the wall. . . .

The next day the boy purchased a pair of horn-rimmed spectacles and was more than satisfied with the effect. They imparted a something æsthetic to his appearance that he could not help admitting had been absent previously. He practised his expression before the looking-glass, trying to make it suggestive of both tragedy and intellect. He had decided to be a tragic actor. Comedy, he felt, was unworthy of him.

Then there was his tie. Studying his reflection in the glass with frowning concentration through his horn-rimmed spectacles, he came to the conclusion that something ought to be done about his tie. As it was it suggested neither tragedy nor intellect. He bought some low collars and a yard of black ribbon and experimented with it secretly for several nights before he dared to issue forth in it. It took a certain amount of courage to issue forth in it. When he did so he exchanged his look of tragedy and intellect for one of aggressive defiance that challenged anyone to comment on it. His

mother looked at it dubiously and with a worried frown, but no one mentioned it. At night in his bedroom he would arrange his bow larger and his collar lower than he dared to do in the day-time, hang his overcoat like a cloak over his shoulders and pace his room declaiming Hamlet. (Fortunately his eldest sister had gone to stay with friends and her room was empty.) He wasn't in his bedroom, of course. He was on a stage. And he wasn't facing his wardrobe and towel-rail. He was facing a vast auditorium full of faces—white upturned faces tense with excitement, rapt with admiration. The applause at the end was always deafening and prolonged. The audience rose to its feet as one man and cheered wildly. The actor bowed his recognition with a world-weary smile. He took it, of course, for what it was worth. He hadn't starved in a garret for nothing. Across the shouting mass of people his eyes met and held those of the beautiful girl who had been his inspiration all along. She was his wife now, of course. She was in a stage box. The boy again had a dual personality. He was the actor facing his frenzied adorers with the world-weary smile and he was also a frenzied adorer.

"Wonderful!" he said to his neighbour. "Marvellous, isn't it? There's never been anything like it in this generation. It's genius! Sheer genius! Bravo! *Bravo!* He's been through the mill, you know. . . . Oh yes . . . it was years before he was recognised. He's starved in a garret. It's taken us all years to realise how great he is. *Bravo!* Yes, that's the girl in the box. Beautiful, isn't she? Oh yes, quite a romance. She's believed in him all along. He says he owes it all to her. . . . *Bravo!*"

The one drawback to the whole thing was that the boy didn't see any opening by which he could join the theatrical profession. He didn't know any actors. Nor did he know anyone who knew any actors. But after feeling vaguely worried about this for a few days he decided to trust in his star. All the great men of history had trusted in their stars. Napoleon, Julius Cæsar—all of them had trusted in their stars. Any day, any minute, he might meet an actor-manager who'd offer him the part of Hamlet. He was practically word-perfect in Hamlet. He often recited "To be or not to be" several times a day.

Wonderful things happened to him in his dreams. He was sitting on a seat in the park in his horn-rimmed spectacles and his low collar and his slouch hat (I forgot to say that he'd bought a slouch hat: he didn't dare to wear it very often) when a famous actor-manager came along the path. He looked at the boy with interest, passed him, then turned back and sat down beside him. "Excuse me," he said, "but you look exactly what I want. I've been searching England for my ideal Hamlet. You're exactly it. I suppose you aren't an actor by any chance?"

The boy said, of course, that though he'd never yet acted he was an actor. The actor-manager took him to his rooms. The boy declaimed "To be or not to be. . . ." The actor-manager listened in tense silence. At the end he wrung the boy's hand and said unsteadily, "Marvellous, my boy, marvellous. I know genius when I meet it. . . . Take the part, my boy, take the part." So the boy took the part and the audience went mad with rapture and there were headlines about him in all the papers the next morning.

Or else he was sitting at a table in a restaurant and another man came and shared it with him and they got into conversation together. The man confided that he was an actor-manager and that he was producing *Hamlet*, but that his Hamlet had fallen ill and he couldn't find another anywhere. He asked the boy if he happened to know an actor capable of playing Hamlet. The boy mentioned casually that he knew the part, and the actor-manager took him round to his room. The end of this scene was much the same as the end of the other. The only drawback to it was that it eliminated the years in the garret, but there were times when the boy thought that it would be just as well to eliminate the years in the garret. After all, he was getting on. He was seventeen. He really couldn't afford to waste much more of his life. In this case the beautiful girl would be the actor-manager's daughter or the girl who played Ophelia. On the whole he thought she'd better be the manager's daughter. He didn't want the beautiful girl to be an actress. She wouldn't be able to take a proper interest or pride in his career if she had one of her own.

So the boy believed in his star and declaimed Hamlet every night to a vast auditorium spell-bound with rapture. Sometimes he had not time to do more than just run through his favourite speeches. For, of course, outside this secret life, the boy lived the normal life of his kind, and often after some evening party would get home so late



"'Er—thanks,' he said. 'It's awfully good of you. I'd love to.'"

that he had only time to go through "To be or not to be . . ." before he went to bed. But he never left that vast sea of tense, upturned faces without giving it the satisfaction of one speech from him at any rate, however sleepy he was. He always went to sleep with the sound of its applause ringing in his ears.

He was, of course, beginning to find his normal outside life rather unsatisfying. For one thing, it was trying for a famous actor to be consistently treated by everyone he met as an insignificant boy, and to have his most weighty remarks interrupted or ignored. People certainly commented on his appearance and behaviour, but not as the boy would have wished them to comment on them. It was generally supposed that his sight was defective and that he had been influenced by a series of articles that had recently been appearing in a daily newspaper decrying the fashion of stiff and tight collars as unhygienic, because they give no outlet to hot air arising from the body. And there was no doubt that his behaviour had altered. He had become very self-conscious. The knowledge that people in later years will look back and remember one's slightest word (at the time so lightly treated if not ignored) and perhaps even reproduce it in one's biography is apt to make one self-conscious. One of his aunts asked him sympathetically if he had tooth-ache, but most of his friends came to the conclusion that he was in love. But the boy continued to live his secret life, believing in his star, though wishing it would hustle a little till—suddenly, it happened.

She was a very beautiful girl. He knew her by sight and he knew that she lived at the other end of the street in which he lived himself. He'd once been introduced to her at the tennis club, but he'd been too shy to pursue the acquaintance and he'd never identified her with the beautiful girl of his dreams till that morning when she came up to him in the street and said, " I say, I wonder if you could possibly help us by taking a character in a play we're getting up for next month ? "

It was wonderful, amazing, incredible. His star had got to work at last. He wished he'd made his bow a bit bigger that morning. He gazed at her through his horn-rimmed spectacles. She was very, very beautiful. She was the girl of his dreams. He smiled his world-weary smile. If only she knew what the years were to bring to them, he and she . . . the starving in the garret and then fame. . . . " Er—thanks," he said, " it's awfully good of you. I'd love to."

As soon as he'd said it he wished he'd said it differently. It sounded too eager and too young. Of course, he wasn't really like that at all. . . . " What play are you doing ? " he said, managing to achieve a slight and rather unconvincing drawl that suggested only youth and nervousness.

" Scenes from *Hamlet*," she said.

He smiled. Hamlet ! It was all wonderful. It was his star, of course. They'd probably noticed him and thought how the part of Hamlet would suit him—just as the actor-manager had done in his dreams.

" Well, come in to-night for coffee at about eight, will you ? " the girl said, " and we'll talk it over."

It was, of course, rather a blow to the boy after that to find that they wanted him to take the part of Guildenstern. The girl explained that they couldn't have many rehearsals, but that if he just learnt it up it would be all right. They'd got a costume for him.

The boy went home and studied the part of Guildenstern, but he knew, of course, even before he began to study it, that it wasn't a part you could make anything of. There was nothing in it to make anything of. No amount of acting could make a success of a part like that. Even if the actor-manager of his dreams were to appear in the audience he wouldn't be likely to be impressed by a part like Guildenstern, however well the boy did it. The girl was being Ophelia. They all said that she did it extremely well. He hoped that she wouldn't get swollen-headed about it because he didn't want her to want to be an actress. Her part was to admire and support him through the garret stage and then to share in his reflected glory when he was famous. The only drawback was that there was nothing, absolutely nothing, in the part of Guildenstern to make her believe in him.

For a few nights the boy tried to act Guildenstern to his imaginary audience, but it was useless. Nothing he did could infuse any drama into the part of Guildenstern. So in the end he gave it up and fell back again upon his Hamlet.

He went to all the rehearsals and read the part of Guildenstern. He didn't put any expression into it, but no one made any comment on it one way or another. No one seemed to think that it mattered at all how he did it, which was galling, of course, to a future world-famous actor. On the other hand the girl was very nice to him. They had many little talks both before and after the rehearsals. She had very dark hair and a round dimpled face. The boy considered her the most beautiful girl he had ever met in his life. She was an eminently suitable person to starve in a garret with and

then to bestow extravagant presents upon when the tide of fortune turned. They didn't talk of anything very deep. Once or twice the boy tried to tell her about his future—and hers—but he always came to the conclusion that he didn't know her well enough yet and that it would be a pity to broach such a subject prematurely. So, instead, they discussed the football results. She was very nice to discuss the football results with. Hamlet hung about her sometimes. The boy couldn't stand him. He was good-looking and thought a great deal of himself. It was terrible for the boy to have to watch him act Hamlet knowing that he could do it so much better himself. He didn't throw himself into it at all. He didn't pace the stage as the boy did. He didn't use half the gestures the boy used before his nightly audience. The boy, in fact, could hardly bear to watch him. And yet the boy wasn't really troubled. He still trusted in his star. He didn't for a minute think that when the night of the play came he'd be playing Guildenstern. The idea was absurd. His star would know better than that. He'd be playing Hamlet. The man who was playing Hamlet would be taken ill suddenly. They'd all be desperate. He'd tell them that he was word-perfect in the part. He'd recite " To be or not to be, that is the question." They'd be amazed, almost incredulous. They'd behave—on a smaller scale, of course—like his imaginary audience. He'd take the part. The actor-manager would be at the back of the hall. He'd come to the boy at the end of the play and ask him to take the part of Hamlet in a forthcoming London production at an almost fabulous salary. Or else if the actor-manager wasn't there the girl would come and tell him that she believed in him and that he must not bury his talent in his father's office. So they'd get married and starve in the garret till his talent was recognised. One day—when he was very famous—an old actor-manager, a great friend of his, would say to him :

" I've only seen one rendering of Hamlet to compare with yours. It's a strange story. I was in the suburbs one evening years ago, passing a big hall, and I just stepped into it out of curiosity. I saw one of the finest interpretations of Hamlet I've ever seen. It was quite a boy——"

The boy, a world-weary and famous actor by this time, would tell him that it had been he.

And then he had to tear himself from this roseate day-dream to go on the stage as Guildenstern and to say, " My honoured Lord ! "

The boy considered quite impartially that Guildenstern was a character utterly unworthy of Shakespeare's genius.

The night of the play had come. The boy, dressed as Guildenstern, stood in the wings. Hamlet, looking very complacent and exasperatingly healthy, stood near him talking to the girl. The boy's face was pale and set. It really seemed as if his star had let him down. And yet he hadn't entirely given up hope even now. Anything might happen. Sudden dizziness might come over Hamlet. He might have a stroke or a fit. He might fall and break his ankle as he was going on to the stage. Then, of course, the boy would take his place and all would be well.

Then they all called to the boy that he was wanted on the stage and the boy stepped upon the stage for his first appearance.

Now, despite the boy's many imaginary triumphs, he had never yet in cold fact faced a real audience from a real stage. And (it is not a pleasant thing to have to relate of one's hero, so I will get it over quickly) he was seized by stage-fright. A terrible panic came over him. His knees trembled. His heart turned to ice. Darkness came over his eyes. He only did not turn to flee because his terror was too great for movement of any kind.

" Get on, can't you ? " muttered Rosenkrantz unsympathetically.

" My honoured Lord ! " prompted the prompter ; but the boy heard neither of them. He was deaf and dumb, paralysed by unbelievable terror. Then gradually the mist cleared. His heart began to beat again. The icy grip was released. He looked about him. He was on a stage, before him was a sea of upturned faces. Force of association was too strong for the boy. He stepped forward with a sweeping gesture :

" To be or not to be, that is the question :
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them : to die, to sleep——"

They tried to stop him, but he didn't see or hear them. He went on until someone had the presence of mind to draw the curtain.

Then all was chaos behind the scenes. Hamlet, of course, was the most insulting.

Hamlet said words that branded themselves into the boy's soul—words like "puppy" and "oaf" and "miserable schoolboy humour." The boy listened, his face set and pale. He didn't attempt to justify himself, because he couldn't think of any way of justifying himself. They wouldn't, of course, understand about his dream. Even to the boy his dream seemed now, after that

When he came out the next scene was over. Hamlet stood just off the stage talking to the girl. They did not see him and the boy could not help hearing what they said.

"You seemed to like him," Hamlet was saying.

"*Me?*" said the girl indignantly. "*Like* him! After the way he's messed up this play."



terrible experience, unreal and far away. As he stood there pale but composed, receiving angry reproaches from everyone around him, he decided quite definitely not to be an actor.

Above the babel someone said that they'd better get on with the play and the crowd around him gradually dispersed. The producer then came and told him very coldly that he thought they could do without him for the rest of the evening as he'd made such a beastly mess of everything and his part wasn't really necessary to the play. The boy bowed (he was rather proud of that bow) and went to change.

"Perhaps not now. But you did before didn't you?"

"Of *course* not," said the girl, still indignantly. "He never could talk of anything but football results."

With a bitter smile, the boy passed out into the night.

He entered the house and went straight to the drawing-room where his father sat.

"Father," he said simply, "I'll come into your office, after all."

"Yes, my boy," said his father mildly,

"I know. I hadn't realised that there was any question about it."

It was annoying, of course, but the boy remembered that he'd never actually told his father that he wasn't going into his office. That detracted considerably from the drama of the situation.

He went into the morning-room, which was empty, closed the door and sat down at the writing-desk. He wasn't going to be an actor. He was going into his father's office. He was going to be a famous financier. An international financier. The sort of financier who corners things. His name would be a byword through the whole world.

He must take to stiff collars again and exchange the horn-rimmed spectacles for a single eye-glass. He was going to be the sort of financier who wears a single eye-glass.

He rested his elbow on the writing-desk and his chin on his hand, gazing into space.

He was a famous financier in his office, pondering deep problems of world finance.

His ante-room was full of people waiting for interviews.

They were talking about him. They were saying that everyone feared him and that no one knew him intimately. They were saying that there was no woman in his life, that there had been a woman once, but she'd thrown him over for another man, and since then he'd never looked at a woman.

He raised his hand to his head with a world-weary gesture. . . .



"Hamlet, of course, was the most insulting. Hamlet said words that branded themselves into the boy's soul—words like 'puppy' and 'oaf' and 'miserable schoolboy humour.'"

PATCH HAMILTON'S GHOST

By MARGERY SHARP

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

PATCH HAMILTON arrived late, after the charades were finished, and found all the company toasting chestnuts round a red fire—Jimmy and Helena and Paterson and a crowd of other people who didn't matter much but were quite good to play with. Jimmy's birthday parties were always rather like that; but it never worried him in the least, because he simply sat and talked to the people he liked and the rest played Bridge or Kiss-in-the-ring or anything else that happened to appeal to them at the moment.

"No, don't move," said Patch. "You look too delightful, like the cover of a really lush Christmas number. Sit down, Paterson, or you'll make a mess on the hearth-rug."

"What sort of a crossing was it?" asked Jimmy, who was a good sailor.

"Foul," answered Patch, who was not. He had come straight from Paris, missing, characteristically enough, the earlier train that would have got him to town in time for dinner; but he was very content to see us all again and wandered round the room criticising all Jimmy's new pictures with precision and brevity, until Helena told him to come and help with the chestnuts; when he replied that it was indecent to expect the prodigal to kill his own calf, and perched himself on the dinner-table behind us, all among the unused silver that had been laid for him.

"Very well grouped indeed," he told us. "You've no idea how nice you all look with the fire on your faces and the shadow in your hair. Though perhaps Helena does. Why aren't you telling a ghost story, Jimmy?"

"There aren't any left," said Jimmy, "and if there were I wouldn't be telling them. The proper setting for a ghost story is broad daylight, preferably with the noise of traffic in the background. You can get much better effects that way, if you work up the atmosphere properly."

"I agree about the traffic all right, but artificial light is good, too. I'm sorry you discourage me so, Jimmy, because I've got a beauty. And perfectly true. It happened to me in Paris."

"Rot," said Jimmy. "You wrote it coming over and want to try it on the dog." He was a journalist, and of a suspicious disposition.

"Did you, Patch?" asked Helena.

"No, of course not. Really and truly. It happened to me myself, and I can prove it."

At this point Paterson raked out another handful of nuts and observed that as he was going to have indigestion any way he might as well do it thoroughly. He also added that Hamilton had better get his fable over as soon as possible and have done with it, and threw in some rather hackneyed lines in praise of the well-made lie.

"Go on, then," said Jimmy resignedly. "Would you like anyone to take it down from your lips, or did you type it in the train?"

"That's a very sound idea," said Patch. "I said I could prove it, didn't I? I said——"

"Don't be silly, my dear," interposed

Helena. "This is supposed to be a party you're assisting at, not a Typewriting Bureau."

"Oh, let him play at best sellers if he wants to," I said; for I felt somehow that the story was going to be a good one, and besides, he seemed really to care about it, which was unusual. "Only don't go too fast, Patch, because I can't do more than a hundred and forty."

So I got some paper and a candle (carefully shaded so as not to spoil the atmosphere) and took everything down just as he told it.

"Once upon a time," began Patch, "there lived a young man of superior understanding and great personal charm, domiciled in Paris and following the arts."

"You, I suppose?" said Helena.

"Me, of course. Don't interrupt. And one evening—the day before yesterday, to be accurate—he went to the Dome for a drink. It was raining," he explained, "and I hadn't an umbrella."

"'Why should I pay twelve francs for an umbrella——'" quoted Jimmy softly.

"Don't interrupt, please. As I say, I took shelter from the driving rain on the *terrasse* of the Dome. It was pretty full, but I found an empty table right at the edge, which is a very good position from which to observe the populace. And that night they were worth observing.

"Just at the table next to mine there were three fat, shopkeeping women, badly dressed in the inevitable black, and with them a man who had the head of Christ. Extremely pale, with a soft, fine brown beard



"Patch perched himself on the dinner-table behind us. . . . 'Very well grouped indeed,' he told us. 'You've no idea how nice you all look with the fire on your faces.'"



" I turned round . . . and saw that a man had taken the place opposite me and was leaning forward across the table. When he saw how surprised I looked he repeated his question."

and suffering eyes. A model, probably, and probably out of work. And then behind him was a woman with a broad, thickly painted face under a hat of sheer red felt cut like a Mephistopheles' skull-cap, with a coxcomb flared up across the crown; and she'd smudged so much black round her eyes that they looked exactly like a doll's —you felt that if you pressed them they'd fall in and you'd find them joined together at the back by a bit of china."

He looked at Helena for confirmation, and she nodded comprehendingly.

" How did you know that, Patch ? It's quite the best part of a doll, but they're awfully difficult to stick back. You can get them out if you take the wig off."

" This one hadn't any wig, only a red cox-



"'Isn't it strange, monsieur, to think that all these people are dead?'"

comb. And then beyond her again there were a couple of pretty girls, very pretty, with a crowd of students, who knew half the people on the *terrasse* and were making the acquaintance of the rest. The elder of them had her hair cropped like a choirboy's and a mouth the colour of fuchsias. She was carrying on three intimate conversations at once, and made eyes all the while at a big middle-aged American who'd brought his wife to see the night life of the town. I'm always sorry for Americans in Paris," Patch broke off suddenly. "They never dare turn round for fear of finding people giggling behind their backs, and still they can't keep away from the place."

"When I was there last spring," volunteered Paterson, "I saw a whole charrybang-full being unloaded outside the Luxembourg. Women, mostly. They struck me as looking remarkably contented."

"And I suppose you stood there on the edge of the pavement," said Patch, "and observed them critically and noted the contentment of the animal. Exactly. Just as I observed my pair outside the Dome. They looked very nice people—much nicer than the rest of the menagerie. You always get a good crowd outside the Dome, and that night, as I say, it was exceptional. And with it all, Jimmy, the noise of the traffic like a big blunted orchestra playing the accompaniment.

"Well, there I was, looking at the show—and no doubt affording amusement to some other superior blighter—when suddenly someone spoke to me. He said:

"'Strange, monsieur, isn't it, to think that all these people are dead?'

"I turned round—I'd been sitting sideways on, you know, and saw that a man had taken the place opposite me and was leaning forward across the table. A lean, dark beggar with the usual black hat and a toothbrush moustache. When he saw how surprised I looked he grinned like anything and repeated his question.

"'Isn't it strange, monsieur, to think that all these people are dead?'

"I laughed. You know the way you do when you haven't quite caught on and aren't sure whether the other fellow's pulling your leg or not, and said something about their all looking very much alive. He agreed with me.

"'Don't they? That's the curious part of it. To see them all here——!' He broke off and sipped his bock discreetly, like a man who's said more than he meant to."

"What language was he speaking?" asked Jimmy curiously. "French or English?"

Patch thought a moment and then grinned.

"Blessed if I know," he said. "He addressed me as monsieur all the time, but then a Frenchman would easily do that when speaking English. And he was French all right.

"Then I noticed that the doll-woman seemed to know him, and he drank her health politely, with one eye on me over the rim of his class.

"'Suicide,' he said casually. 'See that woman over there?'

"It was the American, picking up her bag and gloves while her husband looked for the *garçon*.

"'Another of them,' he said, grinning again. 'Hardly the same type, is it?'

"By this time," said Patch candidly, "I'd got the wind up. It seemed perfectly reasonable for all the ghosts of Montparnasse to hold a sort of witches' sabbath on the *terrasse*, and for me to have strayed into it somehow or other with this other fellow, who seemed to know his way about rather better than I did.. I looked at them again, and noticed that they all had a curious mechanical sort of air, as though the spirit had gone out of everything. There were a man and woman making love to each other, for instance, and they did it as though they didn't care a button, but simply hadn't any other conversation. Every now and then he touched her hand or arm, much as he flicked the ash off his cigarette, and she smiled back absently . . . you know how you smile at a tea-party, Helena. They were completely different from my informative friend, for example, who looked as live as they make 'em by comparison. And then just as I was letting myself be convinced I saw Jacqueline."

"Jacqueline?" asked Helena.

"Jacqueline," said Patch, "is a girl I know in Paris. And as it happened I'd taken her out to dinner that very night, so that when I saw her strolling between the tables with her black head and slim shoulders I knew it was all right, and that my thin friend, though otherwise a very pleasant fellow, was at any rate slightly mad. But he was an entertaining blighter in a macabre sort of way, and gave me the obituaries of most of the people there, including myself. And then I suppose I must have looked pretty incredulous, for he suddenly leaned forward again and said:

"'But they're dead—*dead*, I tell you. Can't you see they're different?'

"Now Jacqueline was sipping coffee exactly four tables away, and I'd just seen another man I knew paying his bill: but the fellow was so insistent and looked so extremely feverish about it all that I thought I'd better humour him a bit. So I agreed that it was curious, and not at all the sort of thing one would expect at the Dome; and then I put out my hand to take him by the shoulder—*not*, mind you, with any idea of seeing whether he was real or not—Good Heavens, he looked as solid as—as you or me, but just as you would with anyone who

was feeling a bit under the weather. And there wasn't anything there."

"Very weak," commented Jimmy when he had done. "They all end like that. 'I put out my hand to touch him, and there was nothing there.' 'And the dog was found next morning dead beside his master.' *Very* weak. I thought better of you, Patch."

"I don't know," said Helena slowly. "I think the logic of it is rather good. Being a ghost all living people *would* be dead to him —different. And he might possibly know how they would all be—born, so to speak. You say the woman in the red hat seemed to know him?"

"Yes," said Patch, anxious after the honour of his ghost, "which is quite likely. He mayn't have been alive very long."

"It's extremely confusing," said Paterson gravely, "when one begins to transpose life and death as casually as all that." He started hulling another handful of chestnuts, throwing the shells carefully into the fire. "Myself, I agree with Helena. I think it's a good story."

"Oh, it's a good enough story," said Jimmy, "but what about the proof? Suppose we grant that this beggar's being able to foretell everyone's last dying words is a proof of his being a genuine ghost——"

"I don't think that's so much the point," objected Helena, "as the way he interchanged life and death and gave Patch a ghost's point of view. That's much more ——"

"I know it is, but you can't prove anything on it. But suppose we grant the other, even then we should have to dog the entire clientèle of the Dome that night to see if they all expired according to rule. What about it, Patch? It's the proof I'm after."

"Right," said Patch, "you shall have it. Listen, Jimmy. I told you he gave me the obituaries of everyone in sight? And mine among them? Well, that was the day before yesterday. The 27th. And he said I was done in by heart failure on a rotten crossing, and was jolly nearly there. Which was apparently why he was so matey with me all of a sudden—slight error of judgment due to too many celestial bocks. And there you are."

"Well," said Jimmy, "I don't see——"

"No, of course not," said Patch. "I didn't expect you would—not right away. It'll dawn in a little, my son." And he grinned so insultingly that Jimmy left off his cross-examination and resorted to force instead.

He flung out a hand to cuff him, and there was nothing there.

THE SHEPHERDS.

'TWAS long ago, beneath far distant skies,
That once the shepherds came—
Their ears with glory ringing and their eyes
With glory all aflame—
Came to the little town upon the hill
That lay so white and still.

Swift through the star-lit street they ran, God-sped,
To find the Saviour King,
His throne a manger and His court a shed;
Then, softly entering,
Worshipped the little Jesus in the hay
And, wondering, went their way.

'Twas long ago; yet all the drifting years
Cannot avail to dim
The glory of that night; still on our ears
Rings out the angels' hymn.
'Tis Christmas Day; come, let us go with them
Again to Bethlehem.

ARTHUR H. STREETEN.



PUSS IN BOOTS

A CHILD COMES HOME

By CLARE SILVA-WHITE

ILLUSTRATED BY L. HOCKNELL

IT wanted but three days to Christmas, and had you walked down Myrtle Street before the blinds were drawn your heart would have been warmed by the sight of those preparations, old but ever new, in which not only the children but the grown-ups were taking part. Just to look at them did the heart good, and took the mind for a few minutes from the everlasting problem of how to make one shilling do the work of two. Those rosy, happy children and the tiny Christmas trees with their green boughs outstretched to receive their glittering weight of candles, toys and ornaments. What a lovely and pleasant sight they were!

Did I say all the houses in Myrtle Street? At No. 30, at any rate, you would have seen no such picture. In the cosy sitting-room of this, the last house but one in the row, sat Mr. and Mrs. John Gatacre by their fire, the lady with her darning basket, her husband with the evening paper. And that was all. No sturdy small boy or little dimpled girl with insistent "And I should like——" Mrs. Gatacre sat darning one of those endless black socks (for John was heavy on his socks), and as she stabbed the needle vindictively through the inoffensive heel hating it for the hundred-thousandth time, because, after all, it was a black sock, and nothing could make it anything else but a black sock, and what she would have liked was a tiny soft flannel petticoat, or a pair of wee serge knickers.

"Christmas," she repeated derisively, in answer to something her husband had just read out about the Christmas-like appearance of the streets. "What's Christmas without a child in the house?"

"Ay, that's true enough," said John Gatacre.

But, after all, it was an old story now, and never at any time had it meant as much to him as it did to this rosy, good-natured little wife of his, with the heartache tucked away at the back of her brave grey eyes.

"I tell you what we'll do," he said, laying down his paper. "We'll go up and see your cousin Mary at the Harriet Linfield Orphanage, and see if we can't beg, borrow or steal a child from there to spend Christmas with us." Mrs. Gatacre's cousin was matron there.

"And we could pretend he was our very own? Oh, John, what a splendid idea!"

So the next morning they set out to the big, grey building on the hillside, which held so many little boys and girls that surely one would never be missed. Cousin Mary wasn't quite sure that it could be managed, but she went away and telephoned, and came back presently to say it would be all right, and she thought that little John Enderby, aged seven, would best answer their purpose.

For not only was John an orphan, but the only relative he possessed having died a few weeks ago, he was literally alone in the world.

"John?" said Mrs. Gatacre softly, and she looked across at her husband to see whether he had noticed it too. For John was not only his name, it was also to have been the name of the little boy who had never come, who would never come now, to No. 30 Myrtle Street.

"I'll get him right away," said Cousin Mary briskly, and she went out again, presently reappearing with a small, solemn-eyed boy, who looked askance at the visitors and shrank closer to her white apron.

"John," said Mrs. Gatacre, stretching out tender hands to him, "will you come home with us, and be our little boy for Christmas, at any rate? We've no little boy of our own, and Matron has so many that she has promised to lend you to us."

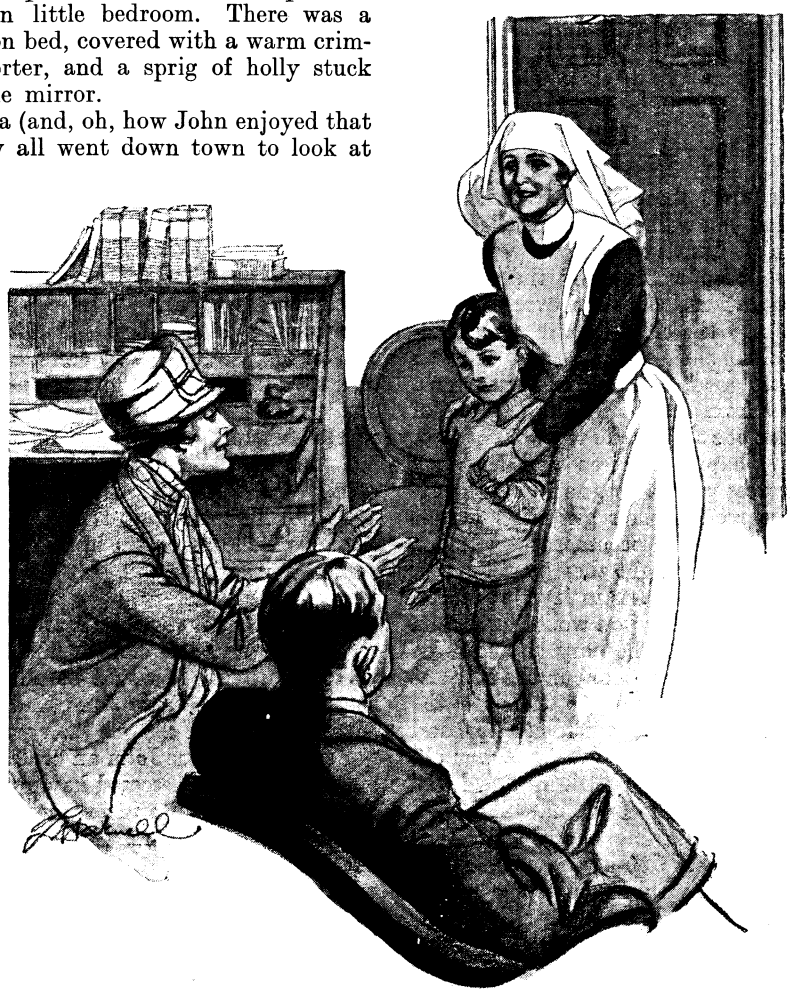
John must have liked the look of the rosy

cheeks and kind grey eyes, for he went across to her without further demur, and slipped a small, rough hand into hers.

The next day Matron brought him down herself, and when John saw the tea-table with its cakes and jam drawn up there in the firelight, he forgot his shyness and bade her good-bye without further ado, and followed his hostess upstairs into an almost pathetically clean little bedroom. There was a narrow iron bed, covered with a warm crimson comforter, and a sprig of holly stuck against the mirror.

After tea (and, oh, how John enjoyed that tea !) they all went down town to look at the shops. At last Mrs. Gatacre's dream was realised, in part at any rate. For she, too, walked like all those other mothers, holding a little boy's hand tightly in hers, listening sympathetically to his comments as they went from one toy-shop to another, their burdens and John's excitement increasing as they went.

Then they went home, for it was past nine o'clock, and more than time that John was in bed. And I think that was the part Mrs. Gatacre enjoyed most of all—having at last a little boy to put to bed, to fold up his little clothes, hear his simple prayers, and then to kiss him with tender, clinging mother-lips as he tucked his head into the cool white pillow.



"A small, solemn-eyed boy, who looked askance at the visitors and shrank closer to her white apron."

Later, husband and wife stood together looking down at him, while, in common with many thousands of parents all over England, they filled his rough grey stocking, and what they couldn't get into the stocking they placed at the foot of his bed.

And as they stood there, I think some shadowy forms must have drifted from the spirit-world and stood for a moment beside

them, smiling once more at their little lad, and blessing these people, strangers though they were, who had been so kind to him.

What a Christmas Day that was! In the Gatacre house there had never been one like it. The rooms rang with John's happy shouts and their answering laughter. It was one long feast of merriment, from the jolly breakfast to the final scene when a weary but happy little boy was carried up by John Gatacre to bed. There had been church in the morning, little John standing between Mr. and Mrs. Gatacre in the crowded pew, joining with them in the old, familiar hymns. People who knew the Gatacres had looked at him with some surprise. One or two had asked afterwards as they all trooped down the snowy path who the little lad was. "He's ours for to-day, at any rate," Mrs. Gatacre had declared brightly. And her kind hand holding John's had tightened its grip. And John (who shall say that a child does not sometimes understand?) had squeezed the kind hand back, looking up at her with love in his bonnie blue eyes.

But the next day they had to take him back to the Orphanage, and that was awful. And awful the quiet of the little house that yesterday had rung with his happy shouts.



"Having at last a little boy to put to bed, to fold up his little clothes, and to hear his simple prayers."

"Has he been good?" Cousin Mary asked as she took the small hand gently in hers.

"Good? He has been an angel!" said Mrs. Gatacre.

Cousin Mary's eyes twinkled.

"But you are not going?" For Mrs. Gatacre had risen quickly and was making her way blindly to the door.

She could not look at John again; she did not even stop to bid him good-bye.

"Won't she ever come back again?" the little boy asked wistfully. But Cousin Mary only smiled, a wise understanding smile, and as she gave him a kiss, she whispered gently:

"I think she will, John. Oh, I am very sure she will."

Mrs. Gatacre sat down to her mending as usual after supper. John took up his paper, but it was just pretence with both of them. John didn't care a —— what the Government was doing, and Mrs. John was so blinded with the tears that would come in spite of all she could do to stop them that I believe the biggest hole would have escaped her notice.

"Bless me," said John at last testily, throwing down his paper, "the house seems lost without the little lad." Then he stopped and suddenly broke into a chuckle.

"You went off so fast this morning that you didn't hear what your cousin said to me, did you?"

"What did she say?"

"Have you had enough of him?" she said; "or maybe you'd like to keep him for your own?"

"John, you are not joking? You wouldn't joke over such a thing?"

Mrs. Gatacre had dropped the black sock and sprung to her feet, cheeks flushed and eyes shining.

"Well, what do you think of it? Remember, a child makes a lot of difference in a house, Ellen, my dear."

But Ellen, after the manner of women, knew the futility of arguing with a man. If John were willing to put this glorious, stupendous thought into action, she was going to see there was no time wasted.

She flung on her hat and coat, and stood there trembling with impatience while he slowly put on his overcoat.

"Be quick, John, be quick. Oh dear, how slow you are!"

"Bless the woman. Can't you wait a minute?" he asked whimsically.

"A minute?" she scoffed at him. "A minute! Dear God, haven't I waited twenty years?"

THE GREEN AND BUSHY TREE.

(THE CHRISTMAS STRAWBERRY TREE.)

OUTSIDE your door stands a green and bushy tree
Whose berries be red as any strawberrie,
And whose blossoms be like heather-bells of pearl and rose!
Whilst your firelight flickers, flickers to its fall,
And cranny, nook and corner darken all,
Watch, ere the night draws near!
'Tis the shortest day in the year;
And the grey December days soon close!

And who will ring the bells of this green and bushy tree
Whose berries be as red as any strawberrie;
Whose blossoms be as heather-bells of pearl and rose?—
Rainy gusts that shake the boughs when leaves are backward blown,
And croon adown your chimney strange songs in undertone;
Hark! The bells begin to chime
Toward candle-lighting time;
And the grey December days soon close!

And who will gather fruit off the green and bushy tree
Whose berries be as red as any strawberrie,
Ripens in your June-tide garden under lily, pink and rose?—
O! The bird of ruddy breast, and the bird of swarthy wing,
And the bird of tawny crest, will go a'berrying
Toward duskfall, where the honey-gold and crimson clusters cling;
Watch! Christmas draws anear!
'Tis the shortest day in the year—
And the grey December days soon close!

ALICE E. GILLINGTON.



HE WOULD BE SURE TO HAVE THEM!

MAID: Please, mum, we've run short of threepenny bits for the Christmas puddings. Would the Vicar change us half-a-crown's worth?

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

HOLDING HANDS.

By W. E. Richards.

"LET us go to the Pictures and hold hands," suggested Barbara.

"We will go to the Pictures," I agreed, "and behave ourselves."

Barbara sighed.

"Don't you remember . . . ?" she began.

"I have no regrets," I said, "but Romance belongs to youth. When one creaks a little in the mornings——"

"Try just sufficient to cover a sixpence."

"And jump five-barred gates just like Douglas Fairbanks. But please don't expect his romantic manners from me. I don't suppose he keeps it up in private life. One can't play Romeo in plus-fours."

"One might hold hands at the Pictures."

"I shall keep my hands in my pockets. I have lost loose change before."

We wandered down miles of corridor lit by shaded lamps, we were saluted by platoons of commissionaires, and finally curtains opened mysteriously before us, and we lost ourselves in a world of shadows. A spot of light from an electric torch played round our feet.

"One here. One behind. No more stalls," clicked a competent voice. We floundered into our seats.

The band crooned "Softly Awakes My Heart," as it always does, and Douglas wooed Mary and rescued her from Indians in three reels with six close-ups. I thought I detected a sigh of delight from Barbara in front of me.

Her hand fluttered behind her back. After all, I thought, why not? I let my hand brush hers. The fingers stiffened and withdrew. This, I remembered, was part of the technique.

Advance and retreat, advance again. Coy, elusive, evading capture, yet inviting pursuit. Ha! Touched that time. My technique was not so rusty as I had thought.

At last! The tiny hand wriggled and fluttered like a captive bird. A hot little hand. Then Barbara, too, had felt the thrill of the game. I squeezed the prisoner gently. It squeezed shyly in return, and then nestled happily in my grasp. So this was what Barbara meant. Not half bad.

* * * * *

At the last close-up, the hot little hand disengaged itself and nestled into the demure little lap to which it belonged. Beads of cold perspiration broke out on my brow, for Barbara was not sitting immediately in front of me, and it was highly improbable that the hand I had caressed was hers.

My suspicions were confirmed when Barbara turned round and whispered, "Enjoying yourself, dear?"

"Yes, thanks," I murmured huskily.

"Why don't you really let yourself go?" she continued.

"I—I'm sorry," I stammered guiltily. "I didn't know."

The lights flickered and went out. Again a shy little hand fluttered in front of my knees, but I sat rigidly to attention, wondering when the wretched film with its interminable American cabaret scene would finish. I loathed the stifling, scented atmosphere. Never again, under any circumstances, would I come to the pictures.

A despairing gesture, and the little hand disappeared. Jolly nice little hand. And a jolly nice little row awaited me when I reached home.

"A man at your time of life to hold hands with a chit—a mere chit—picked up at a Picture House! Of course you thought it was my hand? I knew you'd say that. I suppose I ought to be complimented that you mistook a podgy little paw like that for my hand. One would think, after all these years, a man might recognize his wife's hand——"

There would be quite a lot more in the same key, and it would probably run to fourteen editions.

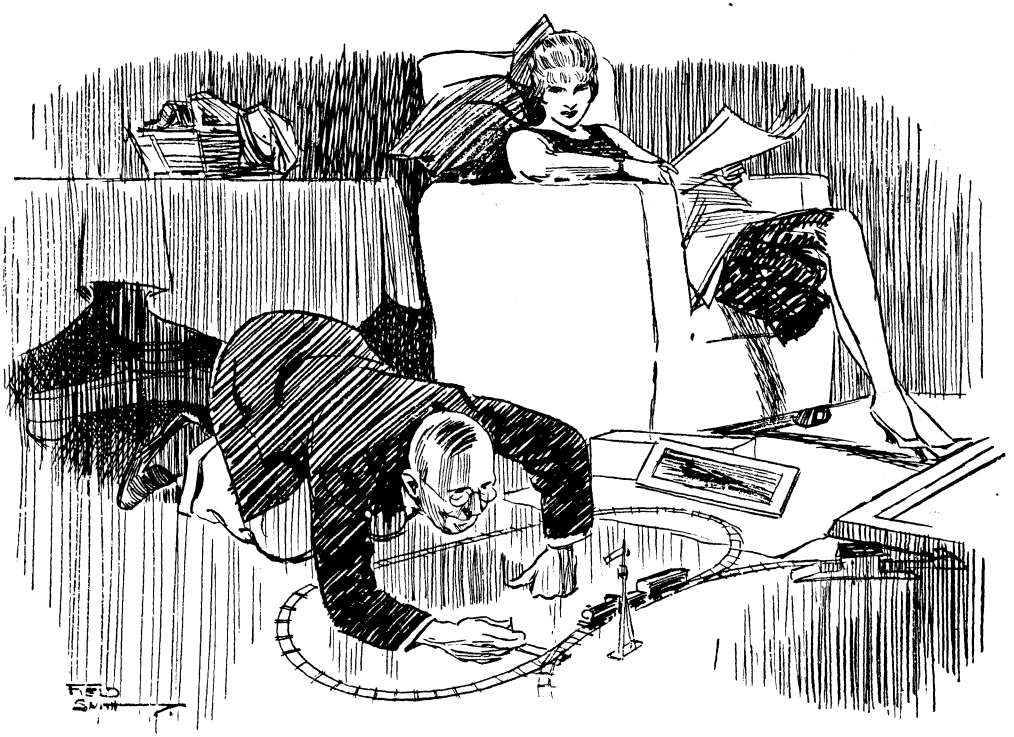
* * * * *

I followed Barbara down the gangway feeling like a condemned criminal on the way to the scaffold. Barbara waited for me to join her, slipped an arm in mine, and looked up with radiant eyes.

"Enjoyed it?" I asked mechanically.

"Absolutely thrilling," she assured me. "Thank you so much. So very sporting of you."

"Not at all," I murmured politely.



ONE SUITED, ANYWAY.

FATHER: I hope Bobbie will like this toy.
MOTHER: It doesn't look as though it will matter much if he doesn't!

"Tell me," she persisted. "It wasn't half so bad, was it?"

"Not at all," I repeated fatuously.

"You were a long time coming up to scratch," she admitted. "Want of practice, I suppose. My hand dangled quite a long time before you condescended to notice it. But you made up for it when you really began."

"Did I?" I stammered.

"Yes. But next time you hold my hand," she insisted, "you must leave your ring at home. It hurts. Look!"

And she held her hand out for inspection. I did not hold out mine for the best of all reasons. My ring was on my dressing-table.

THE FAIRY STORY.

By H. E. L. Mellersh.

"CHARLEY-BABY," commanded Molly from her bed, between ladylike sips of her supper-time milk, "Charley-baby, tell us a story!"

(I am her uncle, but nobody would ever notice it. How I got the infantile title neither myself nor anybody else can remember. But it seems to possess the requisite lack of respect to please the modern young mind.)

"What make of motor-bike's that?" demanded Jack, also in bed, and gently turning my head with his hand on my cheek to a picture in his favourite technical journal.

"That," I said, "is an H. R. D."

"Howmanymilesanhour?"

"Oh, about ninety," I replied.

"Ooh!"

Molly became voluble again. "Oh, do stop showing Jack that stupid motor-bike book! He's so *silly*. He can't think of anything else. Tell us a story, Charley-baby—you tell such lovely ones." (Oh, Eve!) "About a beautiful princess, with lovely golden hair, and all dressed in——"

"Yes," said Jack, allowing himself to fall in with the idea. "Tell us a fairy story about a motor-bike!"

"Very well," I said, "I'll tell you a beautiful story about a golden H. R. D."

"Howmanymilesanhour?" said Jack.

"About ninety."



THE SILENT WAITS.

But how eloquent is silence!

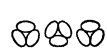
BURGLAR (consulting his Christmas list): Let's see; I've got something for Maggie, and Bill and Agnes and Gertie—there's only Hank and Sally now.



"ER-R—I want some sort of a present for a young lady."

"Sweetheart or sister?"

"Er-r—why, she hasn't said yet which she'll be."



STELLA: Did you call for help when he kissed you in the dark?

MAYBELLE: Silly, I should say not. He didn't need any help.

"*Ooh!*"

"Well," I continued, "er—it was a very splendid bike, this golden H. R. D."

"It had golden cylinders," interrupted Jack, "and a golden carburettor—and a golden silencer——"

"And, best of all, platinum points in the magneto." (One really always needs a grown-up audience to appreciate one's stories to children.)

"Well, this motor-bike belonged to a very handsome prince called Henry," I continued.

"All dressed in shining silver armour," suggested Molly. "Was he, Charley-baby?"

"Er—yes," I said, "that's right."

"How many miles an hour could he do?"

"Oh, shut up, Jack! Go on! What happened? Did he meet a lovely princess?"

"Yes," I assented, "as a matter of fact he did. He was going along a road ——"

"Howmanymilesanhour?"

"*He was going along a road* and suddenly in the distance he espied a lovely maiden with beautiful golden hair falling right down to her heels, all shining and glinting most graciously in the sun."

I was getting warmed up.

"What was she wearing?" asked Molly.

"Well——" I said.

"I know! She had on a dress of pure white satin, with a filigree girdle of chaste design. The sleeves of the bodice were made of most gorgeous lace—very expensive. She wore silk stockings with silk that went right up above the knee. Yes, and—and—— Oh well, you see, Charley-baby, and Prince Henry stopped. And she said . . . She said: 'Oh, kind sir, I am running away from my cruel and wicked stepmother.'"

"Am I telling this story or are you?" I asked mildly.

"You are, of course! Go on!"

"Well, as a matter of fact, Molly's quite right. She was running away from her cruel and wicked stepmother."

"I wish she hadn't had long hair," grumbled Jack. "Why wasn't it shingled?"

"Oh, Jack, you *are* silly. *Of course* she had long golden hair. All trailing down her back——"

"And the Prince said: 'Fly with me; and I will protect you. Sit on my carrier.'"

"*Ooh!*"

"So she sat——"

"Yes," cried Jack with enthusiasm, "she sat on the carrier; and Henry kicked the kick-starter and put in bottom gear and let in 'cceleratator and opened the throttle, and—Brrrrrr!" (on a rising note). "Klonk—Gzk!" (changing gear). "Bzzzzzz—Honk! Honk!"

Jack was out of bed, giving a lifelike imitation of a motor-bike going "all out." He jumped back on the bed and danced about on it like a maniac—still impersonating a golden H. R. D. at top speed.

"Oh, shut up!" yelled Molly.



TENSE!

SHE: Why can't you give me a fur coat for Christmas?
HE: My dear—we must think of the FUTURE, not the PRESENT!

SLEEPLESS NIGHTS A THING OF THE PAST



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BUT WHERE?—AND WHEN?

POLICEMAN (to Jones waiting for his wife): Now then, move on! Don't you know that hawkers are not allowed on the pavement?

Then Jack's histrionic efforts seemed to awaken creative powers. He became inspired. He ceased jumping about the bed and stood transfixed, legs and arms stretched wide apart.

"Yes!" he gabbled excitedly, "yes, and they whizzed off—and the princess's hair got all caught in the back wheel! Yes, it did, Molly. It did."

"Oh, you little beast! It didn't, Charley-baby, it didn't, did it? Oh, don't let him say that!"

"Yes," shrieked Jack exultantly "and Henry had to stop and wheel the bike backwards—and all her hair got all oily and dirty. And —— Oh, shut up! . . . Yah! . . . I'll bite you. . . . *Ooh!*"

When their mother came in I was just separating them. There was rather a lot of milk spilt about the place.

"Oh, don't be cross with Charley-baby," pleaded Molly kindly. "He's been telling us such a lovely story."

"Yes, all about a golden H. R. D.," chimed in Jack.

I made my way unostentatiously to the door.

"You *will* tell us some more tomorrow night," pleaded Molly, "won't you? It's so lovely."

"Well," I said, "I'll have a stab at it—if you're good. But it's rather an effort making up these stories for you kids, you know."

THE chairman of a city railway company was visited by a friend who said that he was trying to find work for a very trustworthy man who had lost his job for no fault of his own. "I am not sure that I can find a place for him," said the chairman doubtfully. "What sort of work did the man do before he came here?"

"He was a sardine packer," said the friend.

"Well," said the great man gravely, "I think perhaps he might fill the place satisfactorily. It is that of conductor on one of the rush-hour cars."



ANYTHING TO OBLIGE.

"Have you any authority to play here?"
"No, guv'nor."
"Well, you'll have to accompany me."
"Righto—what'll yer sing—'Good King Wenceslas'?"

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MR. BALDWIN IN THE STUDY AT CHEQUERS.

POLITICIANS AND THEIR BOOKS

By WALTER T. ROBERTS

WHEN I called at No. 10 Downing Street in connection with the subject of this article, Lady Waterhouse, Mrs. Baldwin's secretary, most kindly showed me the Prime Minister's library.

It contains but a small section of the Prime Minister's books, the bulk being kept at his country house.

But the books to be seen in the library are interesting because they are the books that Mr. Baldwin likes best to read for recreative purposes when he has the time.

Mainly these books are Latin and Greek classics, Shakespeare's plays, a few novels, and some detective tales.

It has sometimes happened that some book Mr. Baldwin specially wanted to read in one of the few stray half-hours he gets for recreative reading when Parliament is sitting has been at his country home and not at Downing Street.

Some little while ago, at a dinner-party at "No. 10," a lady observed to Mrs. Baldwin that the Prime Minister was looking a little worried.

"I suppose," the lady observed tritely, "the cares of high office are considerable."

"They are," agreed Mrs. Baldwin, "but as a matter of fact I think what is worrying my husband to-night is that he forgot to bring up some books from the country that he particularly wanted to read."

At one end of the library was a long table

on which lay large piles of books fresh from the publishers, most of them by unknown or comparatively unknown writers.

These began to arrive in shoals at "No. 10" after Mr. Baldwin's reference in one of his public speeches to the writings of the late Mrs. Webb, which at once gained for that gifted writer a recognition of her talent that she had not the good fortune to win in her lifetime.

Whether the Prime Minister will be able to discover another genius among the mountains of books his speech brought to him remains to be seen, but it seems extremely doubtful whether he will have the time even to try.

Though Mr. Baldwin was not particularly studious at either Harrow or Cambridge, love of the old classics came to him when he was a boy. At Harrow he came to know the *Odes* of Horace almost by heart. He once confessed, "these old odes have knocked at the door of my heart at the most unexpected times and places."

One of the Prime Minister's finest public utterances was his Presidential Address to the Classical Association in 1926. It is in itself a classic. One portion, a reference to the first election he fought, is worth quoting:

"It was what was called an old-fashioned election," said Mr. Baldwin, "in an ancient borough now disenfranchised. The candidate was expected to spend three evenings a week during the time of his probation in one or another of the public-houses which jostle each other through the constituency, listening to and vociferously applauding comic or humorous songs.

". . . When I came home at night from these orgies I seldom went to bed without reading something of the *Odyssey*, the *Æneid* or the *Odes* of Horace, and I read with increasing joy. . . . Though defeated, I had passed through the fire and the smell of burning was not on my garments."

And be it borne in mind that the Prime Minister, then as now, was a very busy man between the claims of politics and those of his private affairs.

The present Chancellor of the Exchequer is probably the most widely read man in political life to-day.

In Mr. Winston Churchill's library, at his home near Westerham, there is to be found one of the most varied collections of books possessed by any book-lover. Modern fiction, French and English, English classics, the Greek and Latin classics, books on philosophy, all kinds of memoirs, histories of all kinds, poetical works, dramatic works, all jostle on the bookshelves. And it is safe to say that the owner has read every book in his curiously assorted collection.

Since he was a boy at Harrow, Mr. Churchill has been a voracious devourer of all kinds of books. He can "gut" any ordinary book in an hour, and get out of it all that is worth getting; he can as quickly forget all that does not seem to him worth remembering.

Speaking at the Cobden Centenary gathering, in Alexandra Palace, at the beginning of his political career, Mr. Churchill quoted a sentence from one of Ouida's novels, *Under Two Flags*.

I forget the exact quotation, but after the meeting, in a hurried interview, Mr. Churchill told me that when he was at Sandhurst he got through most of Ouida's novels in less than a week, and that he had forgotten all of them in a few days, until the quotation mentioned flashed into his mind, and it was exactly what he wanted.

Four of the most miserable weeks in Mr. Churchill's life were probably those he spent during the Boer War as a prisoner in Pretoria. In a letter to a friend he wrote: "I could not write and, worse, I could not read. During the whole time I was locked up I only read Carlyle's *History of Frederick the Great* and Mill's *Essay on Liberty*, neither of which satisfied my peevish expectations. Only two books in a month!"

Mr. Churchill was twenty-three when he wrote his novel, *Savrola*, which is distinctly biographical in composition. Mr. Churchill at the time had not an extensive library, but it is easy to see from the description of Savrola's library the kind of one he desired.

"The room was lit by electric light in portable shaded lamps. The walls were covered with shelves filled with well-used volumes. To that Pantheon of Literature none was admitted until it had been read and valued. It was a various library—the philosophy of Schopenhauer divided Kant from Hegel, who jostled the memoirs of St. Simon and the latest French novel; Rasselas and La Curce lay side by side; eight substantial volumes of Gibbon's *History* were not, perhaps, inappropriately joined by a fine edition of *Decameron*; the *Origin of Species* rested by the side of a black-letter Bible; the *Republic* maintained an equilibrium with *Vanity Fair* and the *History of European Morals*. A volume of Macaulay's *Essays* lay on the table."

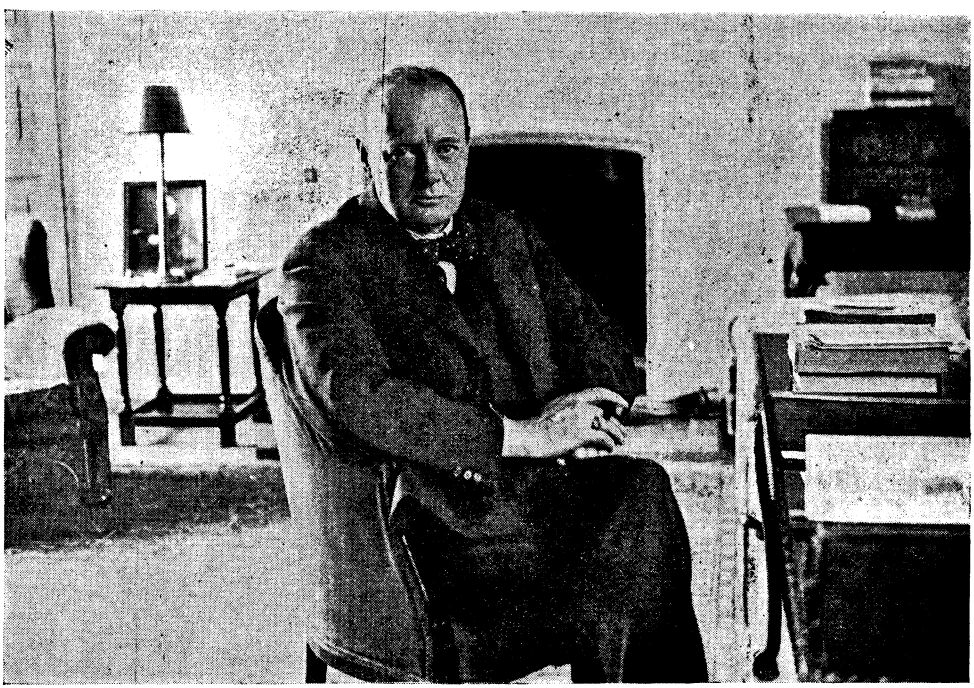
This library of the imagination of a young

man of twenty-three has become, on a much more extensive scale, the actual library of the Chancellor of the Exchequer. The rapidity with which Mr. Churchill has always been able to read allows him to indulge in general reading more extensively than any other man actively engaged in public affairs finds time to do.

The late Mrs. Dresden, the pastellist, who, as Miss Maud Coleridge, did a pastel portrait of Mrs. Winston Churchill, which she gave to her friend as a wedding present, told me the following characteristic story concerning Mr. Churchill and a book.

An interesting fact concerning Mr. Churchill as a reader is that although himself a fairly prolific writer, he has been influenced very little, if at all, so far, at any rate, as style goes, by any author. His style has varied, but it is always quite distinctly his own, and although the quality of what he has written may not always be at his highest level, he is never imitative.

Sir William Joynson-Hicks is one of the most versatile men in politics. He is a man of many hobbies. Among them are motoring, golf, gardening, farming, shooting, and last but not least, reading.



[*Alfieri.*

THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER IS PROBABLY THE MOST WIDELY READ MAN IN POLITICAL LIFE TO-DAY.

The book was one of Galsworthy's. Mrs. Dresden one day, when she met Mr. Churchill shortly after his marriage, at a lunch somewhere, asked him if he had read the book. Mr. Churchill had not, but said he would do so. "I wish you would, and if you have time, let me know what you think of it," said Mrs. Dresden. The next day she had four hundred words of criticism of the book from the Home Secretary. Mr. Churchill had read the book and written the criticism whilst travelling in his car from London the previous evening to some friends near Sandown.

He cannot, in the ordinary meaning of the word, be described as a literary man; his habits are not sedentary; when he can get away from Whitehall he much prefers to spend his time in his garden, or on a golf-links, or shooting pheasants, to reading: but he has managed to read a great deal of the kind of literature that most interests him, and to read it very thoroughly.

The lives and speeches of great statesmen of the past and present have a great attraction for him, and he has gathered a most complete collection of books of that special kind, and is well acquainted with their con-

tents. Of recently published memoirs those of the late Lord Curzon and Lord Asquith particularly attracted him.

In addition, the Home Secretary has what he modestly described as "a fairly complete library of gardening books." I understand it contains over a thousand volumes, and Sir William can always enjoy a spare hour in their company.

He has also succumbed to the attraction of the detective tale—"for amusement," Sir William informed me, "and to take my mind off more serious matters I read Edgar Wallace or my other detective stories."

Sir William's views on how far the work of a detective or a criminal in a detective tale bears any resemblance to the adventures of detectives and criminals in real life would be interesting. But on this matter the Home Secretary would naturally not express an opinion.

One can only imagine what it is from his statement that he reads detective fiction "for amusement and to take his mind off more serious matters."



THE HOME SECRETARY ADMITS HAVING SUCCUMBED TO THE ATTRACTIONS OF DETECTIVE TALES. DO THEY MOVE HIM TO LAUGHTER?

The official duties of a Home Secretary take him more behind the scenes of crime and criminal investigation than do the duties of any other Minister, so that it is probable that he reads detective tales from an angle rather different from others who have been attracted by this form of literature.

It is more than probable that some of them have often moved him to laughter.

A form of reading that has a special attraction for Mr. Lloyd George is that of tales of the Wild West of the Zane Grey type.

When I viewed his library in his London house some little while ago I noticed a number of books of this type on the shelves. In this connection there is a story worth telling. When Mr. Lloyd George was at

"No. 10" during the War and afterwards it was his habit before going to bed to go into a small room used as a smoking-room and read some tale of the Wild West.

When the then Prime Minister was wanted at the telephone late at night (as often happened) and when he was not to be found either in the library or his bedroom, it became a kind of joke at "No. 10" to say that he must be "lost in the Wild West."

On one occasion, when Mr. Lloyd George was going in his car from the House of Commons to his home in Chelsea (this was in 1924, when he had ceased to hold office), his car passed a cinema outside which was a large poster luridly depicting a scene in a Wild West play that was being shown inside.

The ex-Premier stopped his car, went into the cinema and remained there for an hour.

It happened that he and Miss Lloyd George were entertaining a few friends to dinner that night and the ex-Premier was nearly half an hour late for his own dinner-party. His apologies and explanations rather amused his guests, among whom was Lord Birkenhead.

Mr. Lloyd George has, however, read much other literature of a more serious kind. He has read hundreds of books dealing with the history of his native land, and all its legends, folk-lore, poetry and music are very dear to him.

The books I saw at Mr. Lloyd George's house form, of course, only a small portion of the books he possesses. The bulk of them are at his home near Churt or at his Welsh home.

Among his books are a large number dealing with the American War of Independence, the history of which always had a great fascination for him.

Sir Austen Chamberlain's literary tastes are altogether serious in character; his reading is more of a study than a recreation.

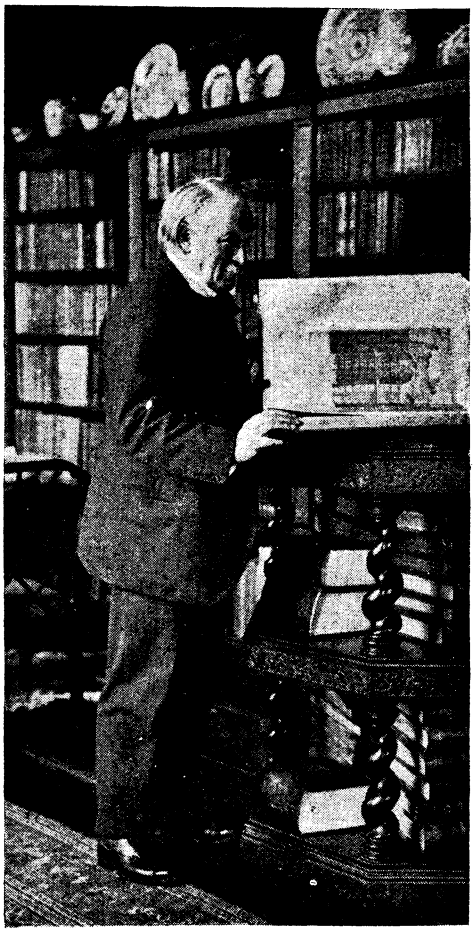
All he reads he marks, learns and inwardly digests very thoroughly. He has a retentive memory and can readily recall lengthy passages and repeat them almost verbatim from any book that especially interests him. In pre-war days I once had a chat with the late Mr. Bonar Law on the subject of the present Foreign Secretary as a reader.

This was, as far as I can call to mind, in 1912. In those days the New Gallery was a restaurant; at one end of the long dining-room were some tables given up to chess and coffee.

The best chess players in London played there, and among them occasionally was Mr. Bonar Law, who was not then, of course, in office, or indeed, so far as I can recollect, in Parliament.

One evening I had a game with him. He was not a first-class player, but he was a very sound one, and I went down before him rather easily.

We then chatted for a while about books, and in this connection Sir (then Mr.) Austen Chamberlain's name cropped up.



[*Faringdon.*

MR. LLOYD GEORGE IN THE LIBRARY AT CHEQUERS DURING THE WAR.

His friends say he has a fondness for tales of the Wild West.

"Chamberlain," said Mr. Law, "reads slowly and likes thoroughly to grasp the meaning of all he reads. And he has a remarkably retentive memory. Once he and I were discussing one of Disraeli's novels—*Coningsby*, I think—and he was able to quote the whole of the passage

dealing with the meeting of Coningsby with Sidonia in a forest."

The Foreign Secretary rarely reads fiction, and he has not, so I understand, yet made acquaintance with any modern detective story, although he enjoyed at one time some of the adventures of Sherlock Holmes.

The library of the leader of the Labour Party was, perhaps, the most interesting of those I saw when getting material for this article. Mr. MacDonald very kindly acted as my guide when I viewed his considerable collection of books in his quiet old-world house at Hampstead.

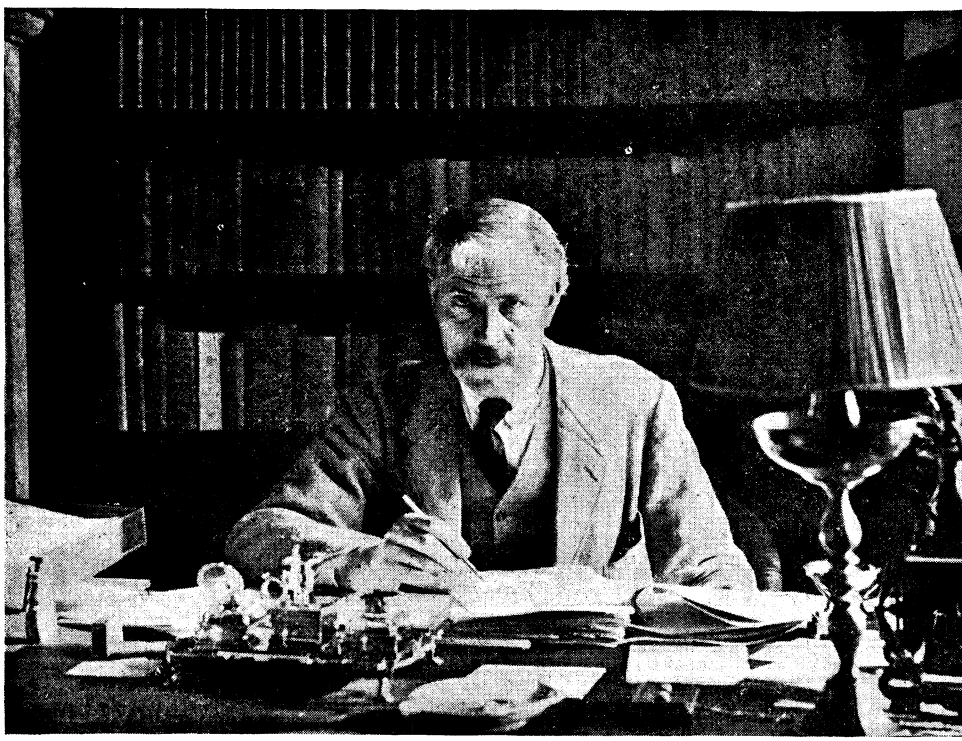
The library really forms part of the Labour leader's life-story.

There are books in it that represent every period in Mr. MacDonald's career, from the time he was earning twelve shillings and sixpence a week as invoicing clerk in a London warehouse to the period when he became the first Minister of the Crown.

A history of Windsor Castle marks this last period. This is the only full and complete history of the castle in existence. It was compiled by order of the King, and only a limited number of copies were printed.

It is beautifully bound and printed and well illustrated. On the fly-leaf the King wrote, "To Mr. Ramsay MacDonald on the occasion of his first visit to Windsor Castle as Prime Minister."

Later, when the then Prime Minister visited Balmoral, he was presented with a history of Balmoral Castle by Queen Mary, compiled and printed also by His Majesty's command.



[*Topical.*

MR. RAMSAY MACDONALD IS A GREAT READER AND DOUBTLESS FOUND THE LIBRARY AT CHEQUERS GREATLY TO HIS TASTE.

Practically every volume in his collection was purchased by Mr. MacDonald with the view that he might gain knowledge.

All kinds of history books, books on political economy, lives of famous men, books on philosophy, line Mr. MacDonald's bookshelves.

Silently they tell the story of how their owner, through years of poverty, laboured to acquire knowledge, denying himself even food to acquire it.

In the library of such a man it is not surprising that books of the lighter kind are not to be found.

When I asked Mr. MacDonald if he read any modern fiction an emphatic shake of the head was his reply.

But there is quite good fiction to be seen there—Dickens, Scott, George Eliot, the Brontës, and a wonderful collection of Scottish tales of the seventeenth century, which was one of Mr. MacDonald's happiest "finds." He does not, I should perhaps explain, go in at all for collecting old and rare editions, but he has from time to time by lucky chance come across some prizes of the kind, among them being a first edition set of the Barchester novels.

One kind of literature was notably—and to me rather surprisingly—absent from Mr. MacDonald's bookshelves.

I mean dramatic literature. I did not notice a single book of this kind in his library, not even any of Shakespeare's plays, though they may have been there. Mr. MacDonald told me he read very little drama and that dramatic literature did not appeal to him.

Rather strange in a man whose own life has certainly not been devoid of a dramatic aspect.

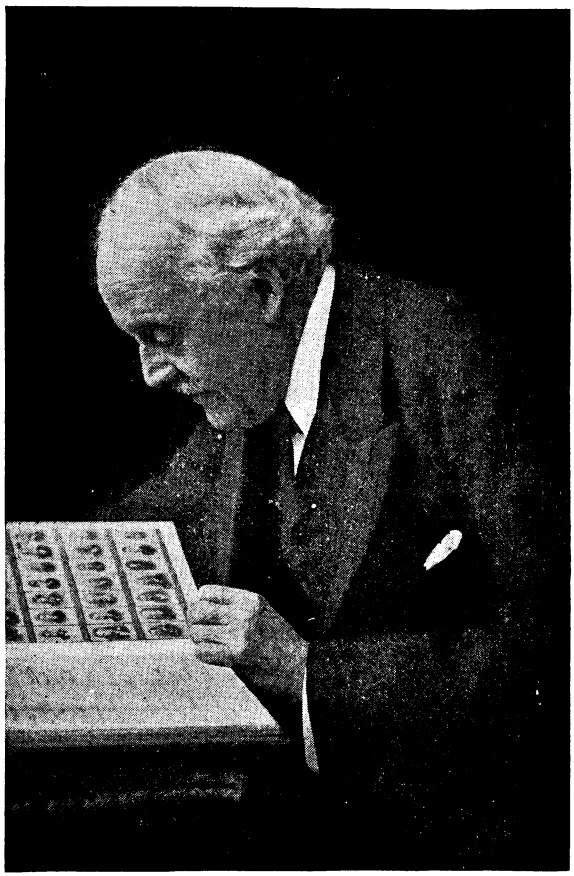
What are the literary tastes of Mr. Thomas I cannot say, for he was absent from England when I was writing this article, but one who knows him intimately said to me, "Oh, Jim, he isn't a great reader; he can enjoy a good novel, and especially a good detective yarn. And he has quite a good collection of books on every kind of outdoor sport, but he is not, and I do not believe he would like anyone to call him, a literary man. He would rather be called a good sport, which he is."

Here are the expressions of two other members of the Labour party as to their literary tastes.

Mr. George Lansbury wrote to me: "I am not sure that I have any literary tastes. I like to read decent books, especially those of an historical and biographical character. Of course I read novels of various descriptions—in fact, I am a pretty extensive reader because I travel so very much.

"It would be no use asking you to come and look at my library because it is very mixed up and jumbled, as I have no time to keep it in order."

Dr. Salter's secretary wrote to me: "I have to say that Dr. Salter's interests outside politics and his profession are almost entirely confined to archæology and prehistory. He takes pains to acquaint himself with all the new books published in these departments and has read practically the whole of the literature which has been issued on pre-historic man. He is so absorbed by speaking, lecturing, and organising engagements for the Labour Party that he has no time or inclination for general reading outside current political literature and the special subject just mentioned."



[*Russell.*

LORD BALFOUR IS SAID ALWAYS TO CARRY A BOOK IN HIS COAT POCKET.

Most politicians appear to have a liking for at least some form of literature. I was

told of one fairly well-known man in politics who never willingly will look at the inside of a book with the exception, perhaps, of the racing calendar, but if this statement is true he would appear to be an exception to a general rule.

Most politicians appear to know something of the pleasures of reading. In this connection I may quote what the Earl of Balfour had to say on the subject a good many years ago. This was in 1887, when he delivered an address to the students of St. Andrews University on the occasion of his installation as Lord Rector of the University.

In his address Lord (then, of course, Mr.) Balfour revealed the interesting fact that he read every kind of literature himself, and found enjoyment in it, however light and trivial some of it might be.

In defending the practice of reading light or trifling literature Lord Balfour said:

"Society, dead or alive, can have no charm without intimacy and no intimacy without interest in trifles. . . . If we would feel at ease in any company, if we wish to find humour in its jokes and point in its repartees, we must know something of the beliefs and the prejudices of its various members, their loves and their hates, their hopes and their fears, their maladies, their marriages and their flirtations. . . . If these things be beneath our notice we need make no attempt to extract pleasure out of one of the most delightful departments of literature. That there is such as thing as trifling information I do not, of course, question; but the frame of mind in which the reader is constantly weighing the exact importance of each circumstance presented to his notice by the author is not one conducive to the true enjoyment of a picture whose effect depends upon a multitude of slight and seemingly insignificant touches which impress the mind often without remaining in the memory."

Such are the views of one of the deepest thinkers of to-day on the value of light literature, the aim of which is avowedly to entertain and amuse.

One who is well acquainted with Lord Balfour's literary tastes told me that he always carries a book in his coat pocket, "but," said my informant, "what kind of book it might be it would be hard to guess; it might be Virgil or Horace, or a new novel or a treatise on the Killing of Weeds. You never could tell."

Once Lord Balfour, when travelling, was reading a novel. A man seated opposite said: "I am a 'commercial,' and have not much time for reading except when travelling, and then I read something of the kind to improve the mind."

The man showed the book to Lord Balfour. Its title was *A Defence of Philosophic Doubt*, and the name of the author was A. J. Balfour.

The author glanced at it, smiled, returned the book, and continued reading his novel.

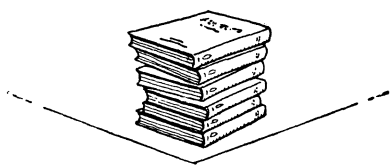
THE SPIRE.

THE Earth, without its spires, without its prayers,
Without its mounting music and its priests,
Without the vision that the mystic dares,
Would be no place for men, but only beasts.
Deep in the dim, ancestral maze of men,
Behind the folded curtain of the past,
Ingrained, we know not where, we know not when,
Love grew that burst in Gothic spires at last.
The purest, noblest instinct of the soul
Impelled men's hands to build a place to pray,
A door of entrance to the mystic whole,
Beyond the threshold of the night and day.
More beautiful than lilies is the spire,
More poignant than the pointed flames of fire.

L. MOULTON.

Letters Patent

By DORNFORD YATES



Author of "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.," "Anthony Lyveden," "Valerie French," "The Stolen March," etc.

"OH, he mustn't die," said Adèle. "Don't make him die."

"Of course he must die," said Berry. "In great agony. I'll help you with that bit."

"I'm not sure I oughtn't to," said Jonah. "Besides, I rather fancy that chapel. Make a magnificent tomb."

"I won't hear of it," said my sister. "Think of the shock to Adèle."

"As a matter of fact," said I, "it's all over. I've passed the proofs."

There was an electric silence.

In a sudden burst of ambition, I had written a book. Requiring a resourceful hero, I had looked to my cousin, Jonah, to fill the rôle. This he had so much adorned that my wife, my sister and her husband had all demanded as of right to appear in 'my next.' 'All is vanity.' When, like a fool, I consented, I cut my own throat. From that time on neither plot, nor style, nor construction—least of all my life was my own. Berry's amendments alone may be imagined. They were, I suppose, at once the most comprehensive, devastating and utterly worthless ever conceived or expressed by any one man. Amid the sea of suggestion I began to labour and wallow, like a rudderless ship. and, when the others decided that the third chapter should be made the first and the first and second dissected and 'worked in' piecemeal towards the end of the book, I took the pages I had written and burned them before their eyes. This explosion of temper shocked them, and, before the winter evening was out, I had extracted the assurance that, if I started again, the subject should never be broached except by me. The next day I took the fair copy of the stuff I had burned, repaired to the library and strove to recover the course I had been proposing to steer.

Time passed, and the book took shape. Sometimes, when a chapter was finished, I would pull up the sluice of discussion, to see what they said; but the debate upon the last but one had proved so unsettling and provoked such a flurry of recrimination that I registered a definite vow to withstand all temptations to invite such vexation again. To this resolve I adhered, until the book had been printed and was beyond recall.

"You've *passed the proofs*?" said Berry.

Anyone would have thought from his tone that I had undertaken that he would become a monk.

"Quite right," said I, lighting a cigarette. "You have to do that, you know. Until you do, they can't start printing a book. You write 'Press' on the top, and——"

"But I haven't seen them," said Berry. "They may be all wrong. Besides, I wrote most of the book. The conception burst from my brain. I supplied all the leaven. I——"

Copyright 1928, by Dornford Yates, in the United States of America.

A storm of protest arose.

As it died down—

"I should certainly have seen them," said Adèle. "The love-affair was all my idea. Besides——"

"But I figure in it," said Berry. "My fragrant personality pervades the pages. The discerning reader will——"

"I play the chief part," said Adèle. "Jonah and I——"

"By request," said I. "I'm not at all certain that I should have given way. It's a question of sympathy."

"Exactly," said my brother-in-law. "That's why I should have seen the proofs. I should have known in a moment. Have you said that my nose is aquiline?"

Jonah put in his oar.

"As juvenile lead and home-wrecker, I think I've a right to be told whether my *grande passion* is extinguished by the waters of death."

"All in good time," said I. "In three months' time a trifling outlay of seven shillings and sixpence will——"

"Do you mean to say," said Berry, "that we're not to have free copies? Do you mean to stand there and——"

"I've got to live," said I.

"No, you haven't," said Berry. "It's a work of supererogation."

"Of course you must buy it," said I. "Why shouldn't you?"

"That's right," said Berry. "Bite the hand that feeds you. Savage the bosom in which you have lain. And we have allowed you to feature our dazzling personalities. But for the magic of our—— Oh, you slow belly."

"How dare you?" said Daphne. "You know that I will not have that disgusting phrase."

"The occasion demands it," said her husband. "When I think—— Did you put in that bit I gave you about the dog?"

"No, I didn't," said I. "I don't want the book to be banned."

"I suppose you want it to be bought." He shrugged his shoulders. "Of course, where you let it right down is——"

"I know," said I. "By not making you the *deus ex machina*."

My brother-in-law sighed.

"Well, it does stick out, doesn't it? Not that I care. It's the waste of good material that breaks my heart. There I am, with nothing to do. I ask you, what more natural than that I should step in? The time produces the man. Is it likely that I should sit still and watch the bottom fall out for want of my outstretched hand? I mean, is that me?"

"Yes," said everyone.

My brother-in-law frowned.

"At the critical moment," he continued, "I arrive at the castle, disguised as a Belgian count with boots three sizes too big and no roof to his mouth. Very good. Bewildered by my endeavours to ask my way, the villain drops an aitch. Unobserved I put my foot on it, and, while he is absorbed in his search for the missing aspirate, I step out of my boots and secrete myself in the arc-light—archway behind his back."

"I've been writing a novel," said I. "Not the script of a travelling circus."

"That's right," said Berry. "Be rude. Be offensive. Just because you've no sense of the dramatic——"

"Hush," said Daphne. "If Boy——"

"I won't hush," said her husband. "There was a tacit understanding that, if I consented to oblige that long-nosed fabulist . . ."

Here Falcon came in with the drinks, and the apodosis was lost.

As the butler withdrew, Adèle came behind my chair and put her arms round my neck.

"Don't leave me on the rack," she said gently. "Remember, I'm madly in love. If Jonah were to die . . ."

I looked up into her eyes.

"It's all right," I said weakly. "He—he doesn't die."

The statement was accorded a mixed reception.

My wife and my sister applauded; Berry raised his eyes to heaven; and Jonah looked down his nose.

"Of course you've ruined it," said Berry. "Justice demands a victim. There's the ram all ready, caught by his corns—horns, and you ignore him. Besides, it's fantastic. He's an ounce of lead inside him and a cold on his chest. Does Adèle suck the wound?"

"Price seven and sixpence," said I.

With an awful look, Berry returned to his glass.

Jonah fondled his pipe.

"I suppose you know best," he said. "But I don't see the point of the chapel, if it's not to be used."

"Oh, no," said my sister. "That would have been too sad. The only thing I don't like . . ."

I left them to it, and went off to telephone.

Some two hours later, Adèle lay back on her pillows and knitted her brows.

"I do hope it goes well," she said thoughtfully.

The profits of the book, if any, were to be spent upon the purchase of a solitaire diamond ring. There are, of course, solitaires and solitaires.

"So do I," I said heartily.

"You don't think it would have been better to——"

"I'm sure it would," said I. "But it's too late now."

Adèle sighed.

"Oh, well," she said. "We must hope for the best. Only, if you can't have a really big one, it's better not to have one at all. You see what I mean, don't you, Boy?"

"Let's hope they'll eat it," said I. "That would mean a bracelet as well."

* * * * *

Three months had gone by, and the book had been on sale for nearly a week.

As I entered the dining-room—

"Two notices," said Berry. "One says, *Just the book for a hammock and a hot afternoon*, and the other's more cryptic. It says, *There is something about this book which formed a guard of honour. The best man was no more to be said.* I can't help feeling that——"

"It's scandalous," said Daphne. "Adèle and I have been right through the 'Weddings', but there's nothing at all. Can't we write and complain?"

I shook my head.

"Out of the question," I said. "Besides, it may have been biting. After all, the hammock's bad enough. Might as well call the book a sleeping-draught and have done with it."

"I think he means to be nice," said Adèle. "If I read that—— By the way there's a letter the publishers have sent on."

"From a literary agent," said I, taking it up.

It was not from a literary agent. It was —but I will let the document speak for itself.

Sir,

I read your first book and it was alright. Now for your second. Do you for one moment imagine that your public is going to stand for this sort of thing? If so, you are very much mistaken. I am only speaking for thousands when I say that I am utterly disgusted by your fatuous glorification of a so-called love-affair which must nauseate any decent-speaking man, woman or child. The whole thing is inexcusable. Thank God, I am not a writer, but, if you are so blind that you cannot realise that you cannot play fast and loose with those members of the public who in an idle moment have been so misguided as to ask for your books, then woe betide you. Some might call it impertinent of me to write thus. Far from it. I consider it my duty to expose the insult which you have gratuitously offered to the whole host of your well-wishers who I am absolutely certain will unite with me in saying 'Never again.'

Yours faithfully,
E. D. Geoffray.

P.S. The rest of the book was quite alright, but you deliberately chose to degrade this by introducing a sordid note which will surely recoil upon your own head.

After digesting this outburst, I read it aloud.

There was a startled silence

Then—

"There you are," said Daphne. "What did I say? I never wanted you to——"

"Nor did I," said I. "Over and over again I said it was alienating sympathy."

Jonah and Adèle exchanged an uneasy glance.

"The man's a fool," said Berry. He drained his cup. "You've got to take life as you find it."

"He's one of the public," said I. "And, as one of the public——"

"I don't imagine he's representative," said Jonah. "Personally, I think it was a very powerful bit of work. That bit where Adèle breaks down——"

"Of course," said Berry. "I always said that was dangerous."

This was untrue. More. Had I adopted my brother-in-law's interpretation of 'a suitable love-interest', I should have made myself liable to arrest.

The barefaced mis-statement provoked great indignation.

"You?" said his wife. "Why, when I wanted it out, you did nothing but rave. When Boy seemed to hesitate, you swore it would sell the book. You said it was a punch. You said——"

"Nonsense," said Berry. "I'm not going to argue, because I know it's no good, but, if my advice had been taken, that passage would have been excised."

"What you mean is," said Jonah, "it would have been converted into a supercharged imitation of an advanced French

farce. Mr. Geoffray would have died of heart failure."

"I agree with Jonah," said Adèle. "I don't believe he's representative. Besides, you can't please everyone."

"If you ask me," said Berry, "the book's doomed. Never mind. Is anyone getting up? I want some more sole."

I rose, passed to the sideboard, helped myself to some omelet and returned to my place.

Berry. "Not that it's likely, but just supposing they have."

"We can look first," said my sister guardedly.

"That's right," said Adèle. "We can all go up separately and ask for it. Quite casually, you know. They'll be bound to have it to-morrow in self-defence."

"And be laying for us," said Jonah.

"Then we can say we've got it, or go down by car."



With an awful look, Berry got to his feet. . . .

"The thing to do," said Daphne, "is to start a counter-attack. We must ask for it at all the bookstalls. We can begin to-day at Waterloo."

"But supposing they've got it," said

Ascot. The weather was very fine, the girls' dresses were outstanding, and Jonah had been given two very exceptional tips. We were quite expecting to enjoy ourselves to the full. Ten minutes ago our sky had been radiantly clear. It was still full of promise: only now Mr. Geoffray's letter

hung upon our brilliant horizon, a cloud like a man's hand.

* * * * *

Waterloo Station was busy. Quite a lot of people seemed to have had the idea of going to Ascot by train.

Adèle, Jonah and I had shared a taxi; my sister and Berry were coming on in the car.

Cautiously I approached the bookstall.

My book was nowhere to be seen.

Fortified by this insult, I leaned across a plateau of papers and mentioned its name.

The assistant appeared to reflect. Then he asked me when it was published and who it was by.

With a sickly smile, I gave him my pseudonym.

He turned to a colleague, frowning, and asked if they had the book.

His colleague did not even reply.

The assistant asked me to spell the author's name.

I did so miserably. Many persons were present, impatiently waiting to be served. The assistant and I were fully five feet apart.



"Through this simple pleasance go strolling fine ladies and men. Lace and silk and satin, silver and gold."

"D'you know the publishers, sir?"

I gave him the publishers' name and wiped the sweat from my face.

The assistant glanced over my shoulder and turned to somebody else.

"Seven and sixpence, please, sir," said a voice by my side.

I swung round to see his colleague with my book in his hand.

I paid for it dazedly.

As we passed on to the platform—

"Nothing like advertisement," said Jonah. "There were fourteen people behind you.

If eight of them buy a copy, you'll be all square."

Unable to think of an answer, I comforted myself with the thought that, with any luck, Berry would go the same way.

We passed down the platform leisurely.

"I think it's the best so far," murmured Adèle. "My dress, I mean."

"Naturally," said Jonah. "America expects this day that every girl will do her duty."

Adèle is American.

As the special drew in, Berry and Daphne appeared.

The latter was laughing, and the former had my book in his hand.

"Just the thing for Ascot," he said, holding it up. "I must find a quiet nook in the Enclosure and settle down. The nuisance is I've left the hammock behind. Oh, you've got one, too, have you? How exciting. Don't peep at the end, will you?" He laughed idiotically. "Never occurred to you to stay and warn me, I suppose? No, I thought not. Perhaps you told them to keep the swine in a drawer?"

We calmed him down and took our seats in the train.

"Anyway," said Adèle, bubbling, "I'm sure it must have done good."

"Nothing could have been better," said Daphne. "The people about were just the sort who buy books."

"They denied themselves this morning," said Berry. "Not a soul in that station ——"

"Only because they didn't want to have to carry them about. By the way, what shall we do with our copies? We can't leave them here."

"Give them to the guard," said Berry. "Find out if he's got a hammock, and——"

"But we can't do that," said Adèle. "If we do, he won't buy one."

Berry stifled an hysterical laugh.

"Nor—nor he will," he said.

"We'd better destroy them," said Jonah. "Tear them to bits. If we each take two hundred pages——"

"Certainly not," said I. "We can't conceal the fragments, and people who find the fragments will naturally jump to the conclusion that it's a rotten book."

"So it is," said Berry. "When I think ——"

"We must put them in the cloakroom," said Daphne. "At the station, I mean."

"That's right," said her husband. "Throw good money after bad. Unless you can tie them together, they'll charge you twopence each."

"The porters 'll read them," said Adèle.

"So much the better," said Jonah. "They won't have finished by five. We call for them then, and they'll have to buy a copy to see how it ends."

"They can have mine for five shillings," said Berry brokenly. "When I think——"

"That'll do" said everyone.

Berry put his hat on the rack, settled himself in a corner and closed his eyes.

After a little he appeared to be talking in his sleep.

* * * * *

Given a summer's day, Royal Ascot may be almost too good to be true. If it were a play, the stage-management would be hailed a miracle. But it is not a play. It is an English festival, kept by the English and their friends, with the King and Queen of England keeping it in their midst. More. It is a high festival. His Majesty is in his State.

Those who down to the Heath in cars lose something which is of value, yet is not for sale.

A path leads out of the little country station, climbs through a hedgerow and gives to a proper hayfield, as sweet and fair and fresh as a meadow may be. Not a house, not a building is in sight. Except for the lazy hum of insects, there is no sound. Any one of those jolly haycocks might be hiding Boy Blue. And through this simple pleasance go strolling fine ladies and men. Lace and silk and satin, silver and gold: bracelets and brooches and buckles and tapestry-bags: purple and fine linen, patent leather and grey top-hats: dainty gowns out of Paris and exquisite legs: parasols and tail-coats and eye-glasses—Fashion in all her glory making her way through a slice of a Nursery Rhyme. What stuff for old Æsop! Could he but look upon the picture, the sage would weep with delight.

Out of the peaceful meadow and into a wood, set like a pretty bulwark to save the pastoral, and so, in a moment, on to a broad highway, alive with cars and policemen and all the fuss of arrivals and settings down.

So much for the prologue. . . .

The beauty of the course and its surroundings, the rich green of the turf, the sparkle of the clean, white paintwork, the sharp shadows flung by the stands make up a setting which only some shining function could ever fill: the flowers, the fine green liveries of the servants, the brave show and

promise of the Royal Box, above all, the air of expectation deck and furnish that setting to a degree of quality very seldom met with in this workaday world: and the ceaseless movement of thousands, eager, care-free, yet full-dressed and on parade, renders a Court of Honour fit for a King.

Shortly before the first race, far down the course, a glittering streak upon the green argues a cavalcade.

Very slowly the Procession takes shape. Scarlet and gold and velvet, wigs and cockades, postilions and outriders, and the magnificent greys, down the midst of the broad, green lane at a royal pace come the King's horses and the King's men. And the King and his Queen in their carriage, with Equerries riding beside and their Train behind. Match me that quiet progress, match me that sight in the sunshine, match me the brilliance of that moment—Tradition itself ennobled by the unceremonious perfection with which it is observed.

Then the Royal Standard is broken, and the festival is begun.

Of the racing itself, I will say nothing. My pen cannot picture the finest meeting in the world. But, if a man loves horses, an hour in the Paddock at Ascot will do his heart good. The parades, too, are incomparable. Enough that the *raison d'être* of Ascot is never overshadowed by the glory it has come to acquire.

I cannot pretend that we had what is called 'a good day'.

Had Adèle and I been wise, we should have lunched with Berry in the Marlborough's tent. But we were not wise. After the first race, we crossed the course and lunched in the tent of a Club to which I belong. As we finished our coffee, I looked at my watch.

"We ought to be going," said I, "or we shan't get across."

"Have mercy," said Adèle. "Let me have one more cigarette."

Ascot is Ascot. For the next three hours she would be unable to smoke.

Looking upon her, no man could have hardened his heart. Had she accompanied Moses to Pharaoh's throne, there would have been no plagues in Egypt.

"One quick one," said I, weakly.

Ten minutes later we were standing between two coaches about eleven paces from a gate in the rails. The coaches were three feet apart and the space between them was choked with the fashionable world. From the fact that we could not go forward I judged that the gate was shut. Because of the people behind us, we could not go back.

"Oh, Boy," murmured my wife, "what have I done?"

"Entirely my fault," said I. "I ate too much lunch."

This was true. But for my 'repeat order' of lobster salad——

"I shouldn't read it," said a voice. "It doesn't come up to his last."

The voice was feminine and came from directly behind.

Unable to move my body, I managed to screw my head round and look at Adèle. A bright, brown eye met mine expressively.

"Ah," said another voice. "That's often the way."

"It begins all right," said the first, "but ——"

"They're going up," said the other. "I hear the hoofs."

We all heard them.

After a seemingly interminable interval we heard them again.

An occupant of one of the coaches was kind enough to tell us what had won the race of the day.

Ten minutes later I learned that the horse which Jonah had commended had been left at the post. Even so he ran fourth. If only . . .

When I say that, half an hour later, our second string won by a length, only to be disqualified, I think we may be forgiven for leaving before the last race.

The charm of the Epilogue, however, was irresistible. The cool grove, the shadows of the elms athwart the hayfield, the pretty argument of antique toil came straight from Virgil. By the time we reached the station, I think we all felt refreshed.

Not until we were half-way to Town did Adèle remember with a shock that the porters at Ascot station must still be devouring my book.

* * * * *

Ten o'clock that evening found us at ease in the library, licking our wounds.

Berry was writing a letter, Daphne was studying the papers, with a faint frown my wife was lining a delicate tapestry-bag. Jonah and I were doing mental arithmetic of which the hypothetical problems were even more depressing than those which dealt with the truth.

"Of course they were discussing it," said Daphne. "Tell us again—what exactly did they say?"

"They said," said Adèle, "they said it began splendidly."

Berry spoke over his shoulder.

"That doesn't sound like it," he said. "Mr. Geoffray——"

"By the way," said Jonah, "you'll have to answer the wallah. What are you going to say?"

"I shall ignore him," I said. "I don't think he's qualified to judge. Counting the bookstall, I'm thirty-four pounds three and sixpence down on the day. Oh, and an evening paper, three and seven."

"Ignore the man," said my sister, "as much as you like, but you can't ignore what he says. It's perfectly plain that he doesn't stand alone. Can't you write to the publishers and get them to stop the sale?"

"That shouldn't be difficult," said her husband. "And they might return the money for copies already sold. I know a man who's got one."

"Can't you alter the next edition?" said Adèle. "I mean, I still think it's all right, but, after that woman at Ascot . . . Did you notice her hat?"

"I hated her voice," said I.

"Well, her hat was worse."

She described it to Daphne with every circumstance of contempt. The two drifted into an arraignment of the hats they had seen that day.

Jonah stepped to the fireplace and knocked out his pipe.

"A revue," he said, "has two editions, from the second of which are omitted the less popular features of the first. Why not a book?"

"The cases are different," said I. "You don't print a revue. Besides, I can't possibly rewrite it."

"Only two chapters," said Adèle. "Possibly three."

"It's out of the question," said I. "Once a book's printed—finish. It stands or falls."

Adèle regarded her delicate, bare right hand.

"'When unadorned, adorned the most'," I said swiftly.

My wife returned to her bag.

"That woman," she said, "was wearing a solitaire. It was square-cut and as big as a postage stamp."

"But she was behind us," I cried. "How could you possibly——"

"D'you mean to say you didn't see it?" said Adèle.

Where other women's gems are concerned, women seem to be gifted with second sight.

Berry laid down his pen.

"I think this should do," he said. "Listen to this.

E. D. Geoffray, Esq.

My dear Sir,

Your kindly communication was of peculiar interest to me, and I should, indeed, be committing that most repugnant of all sins, ingratitude, were I not to render you my most heartfelt thanks for a criticism, not only suave and searching, but in itself a literary gem. In this connection allow me to say with what triumph I hail your spelling 'alright'. Years ago, at a kindergarten, a governess had the effrontery to correct me for the use of that written word—as you will surmise, an arrogant, flat-chested woman, totally unfitted for the high office which she sought to adorn. Besides, her teeth shook. But to the point.

For me to essay to dispute your estimate of my endeavours would be indecent. With unerring instinct you have in a sentence laid bare the nakedness of the land. But, believe me, my dear Mr. Geoffray, I not only accept your masterly and, to my mind, irrefutable appreciation, but I have the honour to identify myself with every word that you write. I will go further. I regard the love-affair as the crowning insult of what I can only style an obscene libel calculated to arouse the worst instincts of all who pick it up. You know. Trunk murders, etc. We are, therefore, my dear sir, at one, for I cannot help feeling that a natural leniency induced you to write encouragingly of the less offensive parts.

What, to my mind, is so distressing, is that, as you will no doubt have observed, the Press seems not only to be totally indifferent to this glaring defect, but actually to welcome a document which you so aptly describe as inexcusable. Without one dissentient voice, the public prints have seen fit to commend this apotheosis of blackguardism in the most glowing terms. I have before me a notice urging all lovers of nature and repose to lose no time in acquiring a copy of my book. Worse. The rot has set in: and I have good reason to believe that only this morning there was an unprecedented demand for my novel by persons en route *for Ascot, where, I am told, there was horse-racing to-day.*

In these circumstances it is not easy to maintain a stiff upper lip. Indeed, but for the timely arrival of your comfortable words, I might by now have bowed to the consensus of opinion, smothered the dictates of conscience and held my peace: but, now that I know that



"'Don't you see it?' said Adèle. 'That's just about the size I should like.'"

I am not alone, now that I have before me your fearless denunciation of this outrage, my fainting convictions rise up like giants refreshed and I am emboldened to look Press, publishers and Public in the face and cry ' Quot homines, tot sententiae ', *or, as they say at the Athenæum,* ' *One girl's scent is another girl's sewer-gas* '.

Believe me, my dear Mr. Geoffray,
Yours very faithfully."

We all tried not to laugh.

At length—

" The idea's sound," said Jonah. " I think it should be bowdlerized and sent. You'll make a friend, and Geoffray will recommend the book."

" Of course he won't," said Daphne. " And what about all the thousands that haven't written ? Just because they don't write and say so, it doesn't follow they don't dislike the book."

" Too many negatives," said Berry. " What you mean is——"

" I mean what I say," said his wife. " People won't like that love-scene."

" What does that matter ? " said Berry. " They can't get their money back. That's good old Geoffray's trouble. He's soaked in seven and sixpence, and he thinks he's been done."

" They'll tell one another," said Adèle. " Think of the damage this wretched man, Geoffray, will do."

My sister laid a hand on my arm.

" If you wrote back and said, ' You're quite right, and, as soon as I can, I'm going to alter the book——' "

" And did it," said Jonah.

" Couldn't you, darling ? " said Adèle. " Couldn't you write to the publishers and say that, as some of the book seems to be misunderstood, you propose to alter those bits before the next edition comes out ? "

" I should only get a back answer."

" Why not do it, and see what they say ? "

" That's right," said Berry. " If they agree, all you've got to do is to rewrite the book. And, while you're about it, if you take my advice, you'll change the title. I'll answer any letters you get."

" Be quiet," said his wife. " Except for that one chapter, the book's all right. Even Geoffray says so. If Boy alters that and —and just a few lines in the last . . ."

With many misgivings, I posted the following letter before I retired.

Messrs. ——— and Co.,
Publishers.
Dear Sirs,

To judge from the reception of my book, there seems to be a considerable consensus of opinion that the love-interest does not command sufficient sympathy. With your permission, therefore, I propose to revise this passage and to let you have the new version in time for it to appear in the second edition of the book.

Yours faithfully,
Etc.

* * * * *

Some eighteen hours had gone by, and the third day's racing at Ascot was nearly done. They were, in fact, going out for the seventh race.

" Don't you see it ? " said Adèle. " That woman with the blue silk scarf and the frightening hat."

" Which hand ? " said I.

" The left. There. Now you can see it. That's just about the size I should like."

It seemed to me an admirable stone. Not too big. I estimated its value, roughly, at four hundred pounds.

With a sigh, I returned to my race-card.

" I—I don't think you'll get it," said I.

Even without Mr. Geoffray and all his works, I could not see one of my own bearing blossoms like that.

" I refuse to give up hope," said Adèle.

I laid down my card.

" You know what got Geoffray's goat ? "

" What ? " said Adèle.

" Your coquetry—vampship. Scarlet is not in your line, and your wearing it stuck in his throat."

" Ambition is always contrary. Grimaldi's one idea was to play Richard the Third."

" But he didn't do it," said I. " His wife was wiser than I."

" My great adventure," said Adèle affectionately. " I shan't like the second edition half so well. And you must admit, Jonah is most attractive. Any woman might be forgiven for falling for him."

" You ought to have married him," said I.

A distant look came into my lady's eyes.

" I don't think so," she said slowly. " It wouldn't have worked, because—well, it's very true that saying, ' Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also '."

I returned to my card. One cannot be demonstrative in front of the Royal Box. Besides, if I was to have a bet, I must make up my mind.

Moodily, for the twentieth time, I read through the horses' names. Not one of the seventeen meant anything to me. Even Jonah had had nothing to say. The favourite would probably start at seven to four.

WARSAW
PENMANSHIP
USAGE
NEST EGG
BALADEUSE
EDGE OF FRAY . . .

For a moment I sat staring. Then, with a stifled cry, I leaped to my feet.

"For heaven's sake, Boy," breathed Adèle.

I pointed a shaking finger.

"*Look!*"

"Edge of Fray?" she murmured. "Well, what about it? I've never heard of the horse."

"But, my blessed lady," I cried, "you've heard of the man! *E. D. Geoffray.*" Adèle caught her breath. "Try and find the others an' . . ."

I left her frantically peering and almost ran to the ring.

I got two hundred pounds to ten pounds—and got it twice. Four hundred pounds to twenty against Edge of Fray. I could have got it ten times, if I had had the notes. As I was counting my silver to make up another pound, the race was begun.



"When we re-entered the taxi, Adèle put her arms round my neck."

Trying to look unconcerned, I hurried across the lawn.

'Blue and white check, blue cap.'

Of the others I could see nothing. Even Adèle had disappeared. . . .

By dint of standing a-tiptoe, I saw a ruck of horses sweep into the straight.

A blue roan was leading, with a chestnut lying second and going well. On their left, a big bay—*The colours of the bay's jockey were blue and white check.*

The angle at which I viewed them grew less acute. The chestnut was gaining on the roan, and the bay on them both. The whips were out now, and I saw the roan's rider call upon his mount. The latter was holding the chestnut. If the bay had made his effort . . . People were shouting in the stands, and the woman in the frightening hat obstructed my view. As I jerked my head to one side, I saw the bay shoot forward. . . .

The papers that evening said that he won by a head.

* * * * *

Less than half an hour had gone by.

"I won't travel with him," said Berry. "I won't demean myself by——"

"Will you get in?" said his wife.

In a thunderous silence her husband entered the coach.

As the special drew out of the station—

"My first thought was for you," I said. "The instant I saw it, I sent Adèle to find you and put you wise."

"I demand," said Berry, "I demand two hundred pounds. In my unavoidable absence, you put on ten pounds for me. I hereby ratify your action."

"Nonsense," said I. "I hadn't enough for myself. If you hadn't been drinking ——"

"You hear that?" said Berry excitedly. "You hear what he says? Because I withdraw for five minutes to compose my thoughts, that venomous reptile——"

"I must say," said Jonah, "I think you might have seen it before."

"You had a race-card," said I. "Why shouldn't you have seen it? Just because ——"

"Why should we?" said Berry. "What's E. D. Geoffray to us? But he's *your* correspondent, your critic—the only critic you've got. You've done nothing but belch his name——"

A shriek from Adèle and Daphne brought him to book. Before they could frame a protest—

"I beg your pardon," he said. "Regurgitate. You've done nothing but regurgitate his name for thirty-six hours; and the first time you see it printed, it takes you an afternoon to read it straight. Talk about writing books? You ought to have spelling lessons."

"Too late now," said Jonah mournfully. "Just 've put me right, too. How much did you have on Usage?"

"Usage?" said I. "I didn't have anything on."

"I don't know why you didn't," said Jonah. "It was quite a good thing. Not like Edge of Fray, naturally. Still, it ran third, and I said 'Only back it for a place.'"

"You didn't say it to me," said I. "You talk about suppressing information, but ——"

My cousin regarded Berry with an accusing eye.

"I gave it to you," he said slowly. "I gave it to you, and you promised to pass it on."

Berry gave a start of surprise.

"You gave it to me, and I—oh, you must be dreaming," he said. "I have a faint recollection that you mentioned some horse, but I certainly never——"

"Oh, you liar," said his wife. "You rushed off to wire directly. I saw you go."

Berry swallowed desperately.

"My dear, I——"

"So that's where you were," said I. "'Composing your thoughts,' were you? Instead of putting me wise, you deliberately——"

"There was no time," said Berry. "I was down to thirty shillings. If I was to put on a tenner, I had to wire. If I'd tried to find you, I should have been too late. Surely it was better that one——"

"And you have the nerve to——"

"I acted for the best," said Berry. "Confronted with a painful decision, I——"

"I don't see your trouble," said Jonah. "You've won thirty pounds on Usage, and you couldn't have won any more on Edge of Fray. On your own confession, you'd only thirty shillings to put on."

Berry waved him away.

"It isn't the money," he said. "It's the principle."

* * * * *

I had telephoned to Bond Street from the course, so that, though the shop was closed, a pleasant assistant was waiting to show us some solitaire rings.

We got a very nice one for the sum of four hundred pounds.

When we re-entered the taxi, Adèle put her arms round my neck.

"Now you have made me a vampire. You've invested me with the order, the Order of the Dangerous Vampire, the O.D.V."

"I'm afraid it's not so big as the woman's in the frightening hat."

"My dear, it's miles better. Hers was quite yellow. I thought it was a topaz, at first. But this . . ." She held off her slim, white hand. "You must admit it is a most lovely sight."

"I've always thought so," said I.

So we came to the house.

A letter from the publishers lay in the hall.

This was a model of courteous reassurance.

They were greatly obliged: at the same time they could not help feeling: indeed, they had every reason to anticipate: finally they begged to remain.

Reading between the lines, I was forced to the reluctant conclusion that the thought of a second edition had not so much as entered their heads.

But nothing could prick the hide of my content. That was invulnerable.

After dinner I wrote to Mr. Geoffray—a cordial, grateful letter, full of goodwill.

I said it was worth writing a book, if only to receive a letter from such a man.

So it was.

PATHS.

OLD-FASHIONED ways are loveliest,
And little paths that lead
From yard to yard and door to door
Are beautiful indeed:
The little paths where neighbours go
To meet each other's need.

Such friendly little paths they were,
For comfort and for cheer,
For understanding hearts that went
To laugh—or dry a tear.
I wish that I might find a path
Among the grasses here.

I wish a neighbour would come in
And drink a cup of tea,
Oh, I would laugh with her—or if
She grieved and needed me—
I would reach out wide arms and fold
Her close in sympathy.

The old world has grown large and strange—
It was not so before,
For once inviting paths led up
To every open door.
Where are they now? I cannot seem
To find them any more.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.



A CHEERFUL REFLECTION.

JONES (waiting for long-overdue country bus, impatiently, to prospective fellow-traveller): Confound it, the bus *is* late! When do you expect it?

RUSTIC: May be 'ere any hour now!

GAMBLER'S HOPE

By J. J. Bell

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," etc.

"*In yonder well lies treasure, ancient, rare,*
Rich gems,—a woman's hope, a man's despair."
ANON.

ILLUSTRATED BY STANLEY LLOYD

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

The story, set in three generations, begins in a London hotel—"a London as yet without taxis, picture-houses, wireless, aeroplanes, night-clubs, jazz." Flora Ballantyre, a Highland girl recently married, hears a wee Spanish boy crying in the corridor. His "Madre" is dying. He has been sent from her room. Flora, with her blue eyes and soft native voice, wins Luis' confidence. He falls asleep in her arms. The mother dies, the terrified governess is helpless, the father is somewhere in the wilds of South America, and Flora, "girl in her 'teens, bride of three days, is called upon to give all that she has to give: her spirit rises to a height it will never reach again, not even for the sake of the son who is to be born to her."

Nearly a quarter of a century passes. Flora, now Lady Ballantyre, has been seven years a widow. At eighteen she had been a lovely girl: at one-and-forty she is a beautiful woman. A sunny March afternoon finds her seated in the rose-lovely garden of a Spanish hotel with Luis de Lara, now a man of thirty, with a man's experience of the world in peace and war. Though comfortably provided for under her husband's will, she has become a confirmed speculator and is in serious financial difficulties. She has come to Spain and summoned Luis in order to put his loyalty and devotion to the test. It transpires, however, that, so far from being wealthy, Luis' only inheritance from his father consists of ancient manuscripts, books, pictures, etc., which, though insured for £90,000, may have no cash value at all. A thinly veiled hint is sufficient to lead Luis to declare that though, as a de Lara, he would have to be hungry indeed before he would take an heirloom to market, there is one being to whom, were she in need, he would certainly say, "Lady, all in my house is yours."

Lady Ballantyre, secretly ashamed and abashed, is aware that with advancing years Luis' childish adoration has taken a warmer form. Scarcely a dozen years separate them. Was there—could there be—any sort of response in her heart? While she toys with the idea her son, Steve, appears.

III.

STEVE BALLANTYRE'S features and colouring were derived from his father; in fact, with his dark head, deep grey eyes, rather long and slightly aquiline nose, and straight-lipped mouth, he provided a notable contrast to his mother. Yet while at times he wore an oddly austere look reminiscent of Sir Stephen, his eyes lacked the steadfastness, his lips the firmness, of his sire's. The boyishness surviving at twenty-two was in his manner rather than in his appearance. In repose his face had a mildness which one does not associate with modern business, sport, or politics. None the less, he was a well-set-up young fellow, and a pleasant one to meet. In passing, it may be mentioned that during his childhood several of his parents' friends discovered in his countenance, though not in any particular feature, a certain resemblance to Luis de Lara, which resemblance his mother, who knew it was there, professed herself unable to detect.

"Hullo, Señor!" he called, with the freedom of a younger brother. "When did you blow in? Jolly good to see you again." He kissed his mother and shook hands warmly with Luis.

"Have you been at sea all night?" inquired Lady Ballantyre, wrinkling her pretty nose.

"Only since dawn. We got one whale, and I'm afraid one was enough for me. Awful to see so huge a creature give up the ghost, though it didn't suffer long. No, I'm not going to talk about it now, and I'm not going to sit down, Señor. Mother is scenting the whale oil, and I want a change rather badly. See you later."

"The Señor," Lady Ballantyre put in, "says he can stay only for dinner—must take the night train home."

"That's rotten news, old man." Steve looked kindly at Luis. "But I suppose you have things to look after nowadays. You must——"

The hotel servant had come down with a second telegram for Lady Ballantyre. Her lips set as she took it and signed to the man to retire.

"More business, Mother! Too bad of me, isn't it, Señor?" said Steve. "I ought to be doing that sort of thing for her now, and I'm still letting her do it for me!" There was in his tone a playfulness which, it would seem, he reserved for his mother. But next moment he was serious. "By any chance, is one of your wires from the yacht agents?"

She shook her head. "I'm afraid you'll be vexed with me, Steve, but I have never written to them."

With a touch of impatience he said: "Really, Mother, if we're not quick, we shall lose our chance of the *Miranda* for this summer. I'll send a wire now and fix it up. I ought to have looked after the business myself, anyway." His face cleared, and to Luis he explained: "It's about the yacht we had, last August and September. The cruising around the West Coast of Scotland was such a fine experience that we decided to repeat it. Only, mother seems to have got it into her head"—good-humouredly—"that no people but ourselves will want to charter the *Miranda*!"

"Mother," said Lady Ballantyre, with a smile that seemed to Luis not quite sincere, "has got it into her head that a big steam-yacht, with a crowd of friends on board, makes for a costly entertainment."

"And now you are losing your memory, my dear!" said her son. "A month ago we agreed, not only that the charter should be my funeral, but that there should be no crowd. The one person I'm going to invite is—the Señor! It's absurd that he should have been round the famous golf-courses of the East Coast and never once seen the golfless glory of the West. Why, Mother, you ought long ago to have shown him at least your old home, the home of your ancestors—Tobermory!"

"The Señor," she returned, emulating his levity, "does not believe there is any such place, though he must have heard me mention it a hundred times!"

"The Señor," said Luis, "is perfectly satisfied that Tobermory exists. It is of note by reason of its lost treasure——"

"The treasure also is regarded by many people as mythical."

"Lady Ballantyre," said Luis, who was apt to say foolish things when perturbed, "is, doubtless, referring to the sunken treasure, of which, by the way, my father ——"

"Oh, don't be silly, Luis," she murmured.

"I don't know what you and mother are getting at, Señor," said Steve. "The point is, you are booked to sail with us in August."

"Thank you, Steve. At the moment the chances of my being in England then do not look too——"

"Steve," his mother interposed, "the Señor well knows he would be welcome, but we have still to learn for certain that we can have the *Miranda*."

"Then the sooner I wire, the better. We must have the *Miranda*, and just for our three selves." So saying, Steve departed.

Methodically Lady Ballantyre smoothed out the unopened telegram, did the same to the first, and placed them together. Smiling uncertainly, she looked up at Luis, whose gaze came slowly back from the Bay. More than ever he was persuaded that something was amiss.

"Steve is growing up," she said, "and I shall soon be an old woman."

At the unfamiliar note of bitterness in her soft voice he frowned, but answered nothing.

"Luis, it is two years since you saw Steve. What do you think of him now?"

"I have not had much time to form an opinion, have I? So much happens between twenty and twenty-two. I dare say I shall find changes when I have a proper talk with him. Meantime, I can only say that he strikes me as having grown—well, more manly."

"Meaning, more independent?"

"That seems included in the word, I think. Surely it does not hurt you, Lady?"

"It is true—in a sense." She was again fingering the telegrams. "Steve is a good boy," she went on. "He has given me none"—she hesitated—"or, at least, scarcely any of the worries that many boys of his age give their mothers. But he is turning from the way his father would have had him take, the way I fondly hoped I had set him on. As you know, my husband gave the best of his years to politics, and if he did not leave a great name, he left a spotless memory. They used to call him—more or less mockingly, I suppose—the super-idealist. But he did live in clean politics; he could not understand why men should lower themselves to the other sort; and he believed that Steve could not choose a finer career."

"And you?"

"I have tried to believe it, too. But, you see, I was merely a political hostess, and therefore no idealist, and—well, I'm afraid my ambition for Steve has been simply a brilliant political future founded on education and money. Half the politicians I used to meet were hampered by the lack of the one, or the other, or both. Earnestness is not the same thing as ability, and honesty alone is not enough. May not a man do his best for his country in the expectation of making his country do its best for him? Oh, yes"—with a short laugh—"though I'd hate to see my own boy in the category, I have in me a sneaking admiration for the political adventurers."

Luis took out his cigarette-case and toyed with it.

"From my old acquaintance with Steve," he said presently, "I should judge that he has inherited his father's ideals of decency and straightness; and, as a friend of the family, I have the privilege of knowing that he is not going to be—hampered. And from my knowledge of you, Lady, I should guess that your admiration for the political adventurer is about as deep as mine for the clever burglar who robs any house but my own. But such admirations seldom spring up in the minds of people who are perfectly happy, and so I am wondering how, exactly, Steve has disappointed you. I cannot imagine him jibbing at the political career. At twenty he was as keen as mustard. I remember going to Oxford to hear him in a debate on some Empire question——"

"Ah, yes; but since then, at Oxford, he has been caught by the Socialist wave, and his ideas to-day would have shocked his poor father beyond words. Now, you see, why I am troubled—about him."

"It's a great pity—if it troubles you seriously," Luis said meditatively. "It would be easy to grow flippant about the waves that catch young men at Oxford—I was caught by so many different ones, myself. Probably Steve got wetter than I ever did, but of one thing I'm sure, he has kept his ideals dry. So it might have been worse."

"Luis, don't talk as if it were hopeless! He has changed once; he may—must—change again!"

"All human beings change, more or less. Only idiots change not at all. But, perhaps, Steve has not changed as much as you imagine. Perhaps his mind was waiting for the wave. Now, when I think back, I remember things of Steve, as a boy, that would have worried Sir Stephen. I remember his asking me all sorts of questions about the War and its rights and wrongs, and being dissatisfied with my answers. In other words, even in those days he had the—the tendency. Lady, I think you should seek to acquire resignation. It might, as I have said, be so much worse. There is nothing disgraceful, or even freakish, about it. In England to-day the gentleman socialist is a commonplace——"

"Luis, do you approve?"

"Not I—a Catholic! Only I recognise that this is not the end of the world. Steve is still your good boy; he has changed in nothing, so far as I know, but a few ideas——"

"A change that will spoil his whole career!"

"Not his career—only the chart made of it by his parents."

"Luis, are you trying to make me angry? Can you deny that he will suffer socially?"

"I cannot figure his suffering as unrelieved," Luis answered, with a glint of irony. "You have nowadays in England so few immoderates who give dinner parties—and I seem to remember that you used to make fun of them." The irony went out. "Indeed, when you speak of his suffering socially, I begin to wonder whether your fears for Steve's future are not more particular than general. Shall I be taking a liberty if I suggest to you that your worst fears are concentrated upon one——"

With her unoccupied hand Lady Ballantyre made a cutting-off movement.

"It's no news to you, Luis, that I had set my heart on a match between Steve and

Winifred Charters. It would have been so wonderful an alliance for two ambitious young people. Winifred has grown into a beautiful young woman, with the brains of a dozen of her sort and—and eighty thousand pounds of her own. You, I know, did not admire her in her 'teens, but——"

"I thought her too keen, too business-like for a young girl, and I still doubt whether a clever woman makes the best wife for a man seeking a high place in politics——"

"Thank you!" Lady Ballantyre laughed.

"I have never thought of you, Lady, as a clever woman," he replied quietly, "nor yet as a business-like one. You helped your husband, I believe, because you were *not* keen on politics, and because you were—well, what you are. Still, you know Miss Charters far better than I do, and certainly that double-dyed Conservative, her father, must have an important influence. The money, of course, does not matter——"

"Money never does not matter! As for Sir Hilyard Charters, he has been very kindly interested in Steve, has often declared his intention of helping him when the time should arrive, and, as I cannot doubt, would have favoured him as a prospective son-in-law. But when Steve declares himself a Socialist, as he has begun to threaten to do, Sir Hilyard will slam the door in his face!"

"And, Miss Winifred—will not she slip round from the back door, or out of a window?"

"Winifred is fond of Steve—regards him, I may say, as her particular property—and has lost no opportunities of putting him in contact with the people of her circle who might one day be useful to him. If Steve's ambition should ever flag, he would have hers to urge him on. But she will never marry a Socialist! Oh, all would have been well but for this deplorable change!"

"And Steve?"

For a moment or two Lady Ballantyre appeared to be controlling herself.

"Luis," she began abruptly, "in the past seven or eight months there have been times when I could have wrung my hands, wishing I had never made that cruise of last summer. Half-way through it we put into Tobermory to see a cousin of mine, whom I had not met for many years, a man who has done remarkably well for himself in that little place; a man whom, I believe, you would like and admire. A widower, his sons abroad, he was living there with his daughter, a girl of twenty——"

"Charming, unsophisticated——"

"Perhaps, but not stupid." Lady Ballantyre sighed. "Ailsa is not unlike myself, Luis, as you first saw me."

"I adore her already," he said gravely. "And so poor Steve——"

"I was a perfect idiot! I asked her to join us on the *Miranda*, for a trip up to Gairloch. She was certainly a success with the men—with the women too—and seemed to find them all amusing in her quiet way. I didn't worry about Steve then, but after we came home I began to notice that he was not so devoted to Winifred. Then he took to writing to Ailsa—made no secret about it—and I suppose they have been corresponding ever since. She went out to Canada, to spend the winter and spring with her brothers, and is still there, thank goodness! And that's how it stands at present."

"And you are uneasy about this yachting cruise in August?"

"Surely I am! Ailsa will be back at Tobermory then. That's why the foolish boy is so determined to have the *Miranda*—without the crowd! And I—I can't do anything."

"The only thing you could do would be to refuse to give your presence on the yacht—but you won't do that?"

"I can't—I won't risk a quarrel with my son."

"Quite right, Lady," he said softly. "Then, since, as I take it, you have nothing against this girl, who is your own relation, cannot you accept her along with the Socialism, and let the rest go hang itself? A man's politics, at all events, have nothing to do with his happiness. Publicity is only a more or less unhealthy excitement. Steve, being financially independent, can eventually marry the girl he wants to marry, whether she be this Highland girl or another. It seems to me that you are only making mountains of trouble for yourself and—I hate to see you troubled about a trifle."

"I can't accept the situation, Luis! Had it not been for Ailsa he would still have been under the good influence of Winifred, and still, because of that influence, a staunch Conservative. I don't blame Ailsa Maclean—she, of course, has nothing to do with the Socialism—she's an aristocrat in her own little way; but, I tell you, I would stop at nothing to bring about her eclipse and Steve's return to Winifred! His future, if it is to be worth anything, lies with the English girl. No, I won't give in—I won't—yet!"

"I'm sorry," said Luis.



"'Yes, I know, Mother; but I want a cheque from you. You might write me one for five hundred.'"

Lady Ballantyre seemed to droop. She allowed herself a glimpse of his face, and detected the puzzled tenderness in his gaze. Had he asked her then, point-blank, just why she regarded Winifred Charters as her son's salvation, she would surely have opened that dark heart of hers. But the question that came presently had a steadying effect.

Luis leaned over and laid his hand upon hers holding the telegrams.

"Is there nothing a poor friend could do?"

She shook her head.

"Whatever it might be, Lady, you would have to ask only once. Will you remember that?"

Moved by his compassion, she let go the papers and turned her palm to his. "You have been very faithful, Luis."

"At last you have discovered my solitary virtue," he said, more lightly, letting go her hand. "It is its own reward, you know, and I am content."

Once more she took hold of the telegrams. "Take me up to the hotel," she said, and rose. "I must attend to some wretched correspondence. Steve should be almost ready now, and will be wanting a chat with you. What will you talk about?"

"Whales?"

"A safe subject!"

They moved up the garden.

"There is nothing you wish me to say to Steve?" he asked.

"No."

"If he tells me anything, I shall forget it. You understand that, Lady?"

"I understand it, knowing you. Espionage is not the sort of thing I should ask you to do for me," she said, with a dry little smile.

His colour darkened. "Yet, after all, if it would serve you greatly, I might even do it."

"No, no, Luis! You could not betray Steve to his mother, any more than he could betray you to your friend. Ask him about Tobermory, if you like—and the Treasure."

"He might think I meant the girl."

Lady Ballantyre gave a brief, sorry laugh. "In a way," she said, "I wish it could be Ailsa. After all, my heart is Highland."

She left him in the lounge, where he sat down to wait for Steve, and to wonder about many things.

In her sitting-room on the first floor Lady Ballantyre placed a leather case upon the writing-table, unlocked it and seated herself. She opened the second telegram and, with a bleak look on her beautiful face, studied each message. They were from the two London stockbrokers with whom she had been dealing for years. The little groups of figures may have betokened good fortune to others, but to Lady Ballantyre they conveyed dreary news. And dreary news had been her almost daily portion for a long time now.

For more than five years Lady Ballantyre had been operating on the Stock Exchange—dabbling cautiously at first, then dipping deeper, and, at last, plunging boldly, wildly, madly. Three years ago she had been the winner of nearly a million pounds. To-day she was wondering how long she could go on—whether, indeed, she could go on any longer. The £200,000—to express it in round figures—left her by her husband, was gone—had disappeared a year ago; the £120,000, the patrimony of her son, who had trusted her as his banker, was all but gone. Remained the few thousands in War Stock, her inheritance from her father, and some money in the bank, between her and nothingness. Once she had been methodical; latterly she had become the reverse, afraid to face things. Only vaguely she knew how she stood financially, what debts she owed. All was blurred. Yet she had gone on gambling, spending extravagantly for distraction's sake. . . . But surely the end was near.

On the telegrams she jotted little sums—all losses. . . . The gold pencil dropped from her fingers, which went up to the white lids shielding the blue eyes, and pressed hard.

"Oh, God! Why did I ever begin?"

After a while she roused herself to take a couple of forms and write her messages to the London stockbrokers. This took time, for her indecision was great. Ultimately she emptied her purse on the blotter and proceeded to count the Spanish coins. If the number were odd, she would sell; if even, hold. She did this many times, because she had many bargains open. And when, at last, she had filled in the forms, she gave way to new doubts and tore them up. . . . She tried counting the heads of the coins, and then the tails, or, rather, the crosses. . . . Finally, she determined to do nothing at all—let things take their course for another twenty-four hours.

She was going through a bunch of letters, some of them requests for money, when her son came in, an unsealed envelope in his hand.

"The Señor is waiting for you in the lounge," she said.

"Yes, I know, Mother; but I want a

cheque from you. You might write me one for five hundred."

"Five hundred, Steve! . . . Oh, you mean for the *Miranda*! But the agents don't ask a deposit from us."

"Not for the *Miranda*. While I was dressing I glanced at the *Mail*. There has been an awful colliery disaster in the North of England, and I must send something to the relief fund."

"Yes,"—she paused—"that's all right, of course, and very thoughtful of you, Steve—but, surely, less would do—why, twenty would be generous."

He laughed apologetically. "The *Miranda* got on my conscience as soon as I read of the disaster. Considering what I shall pay for the charter, I can't decently send less than five hundred to the miners, or their widows. Anyway, it's nothing to bother about. I can save it on something else, later on. I'm not spending more than my income—am I?"

"N-no. Still——"

"Carry on, Mother! Payable to 'Southbridge Relief Fund.'"

She dared not argue. Steve was no spendthrift. He had not yet exhausted half his previous year's income. At any moment he could reasonably ask her for thousands. What if he should do so? She felt cold.

As she wrote, he stooped and kissed her hair, saying: "You really are a convenient banker!"

With a semblance of a smile she handed him the slip, saying: "I have a lot of writing to do, so don't expect me downstairs till dinner-time."

"Righto."

When he had gone, she got up, went unsteadily to the door, and turned the key.

IV.

STEVE, having posted his letter at the bureau, found Luis in the lounge.

"I want a drink," he remarked, sitting down. "What's yours, Señor?"

The older man's glance may have been a trifle quizzical—remembering Steve at twenty, he had been prepared to find him a Prohibitionist at twenty-two—but his answer held no note of amusement.

"I don't know that I want anything at the moment."

"Oh, come on, Luis!"

"Well, give me a lead."

"I'm going to have sherry," said Steve, lapsing youthfully, "because it is Spanish."

Luis made a face. "Then I'll have Scotch, because it is English. Besides, I had better get into training for our visit to Tobermory."

Steve grew up again, and delayed giving the order to the attentive waiter. "Look here, old man," he said earnestly, "you used to loathe whisky, and it's all tradition about guests in the Highlands having to drink it. *I* never touch it."

"Don't you?" said Luis gently and without irony. "Does not your host, Mr. Maclean, insist on your taking at least a glass of welcome and another at farewell? Such, I have heard, is the custom."

"Maclean will certainly offer it to *you*—he knows *my* views—and may be a bit disappointed if you refuse—he likes one himself when he has company; but he is too much of a gentleman to insist. So what will you have?"

"Whisky! The excellent Maclean shall not be disappointed by me. And you might give me one of your nice English cigarettes to mitigate the dose."

"Don't see why you should make a martyr of yourself because you're in Spain." Steve gave the order and laid his open case on the table. "Can't you buy decent cigarettes where you live, or import them?"

"I could import them, I suppose; but at present I'm taking things as they are. In fact, I'm learning to roll my own cigarettes—in private. The art was not included in my inheritance, and my fingers are clumsy."

"They used to be supple enough." Steve was watching the long, finely shaped, finely kept fingers holding the match. "I say! You haven't given up the piano, have you?"

"Not quite, though the piano at my place is rather an ancient affair, and is apt, in the more emotional passages, to remind the player of dry bones. You see, Steve, everything, including the house, is more or less antique, for my father, who lived for study, travel and research, never troubled to renew anything."

"But why not get a new piano? You must miss——"

"Lately I have seemed to have plenty to do in going through, not only my father's writings, but the enormous quantities of old family papers, which nobody has bothered about for generations. It seems possible that some day I may be able to get a sort of story out of them."

"A book?"

"In manuscript, anyway. Some of my far-back forefathers did things—mostly violent things. At least three of them went

out with the Armada. Not very admirable chaps, I'm afraid; but we revere our ancestors mainly because we have never met them."

"Sounds interesting," commented Steve. "Still, old man, if you are going to stay in Spain for a bit longer, you'll want a decent piano, won't you?"

"No doubt!"

"I beg your pardon," said Steve, drawing back from the table.

"I beg yours, old chap." Luis had been conscious of his curtness before the other spoke. "I had no right to be ratty." He thought for a moment. Their friendship had never come to close intimacy, but in this instance it seemed a little absurd to go on hiding from the son what he had told to the mother. And Luis, in his two years' exile, had lost nothing of his native craving for, and sensitiveness to, sympathy, of the more silent sort.

"Perhaps I ought to have mentioned," he said, "that in these times my chief study is economy. My father's estate was a much smaller affair than the poor man happily imagined. I know you are sorry, Steve, so we can forget about it and talk of other things."

Once more the boy peeped out of Steve. Shocked, he exclaimed: "Economy! Why, that's too rotten! I say, look here, old man, you must draw on me—you really must! I happen to be pretty flush at the moment, so——"

He halted, uncertain. "Please don't be annoyed, Luis."

"I'm not," said Luis, the proud look passing. "On the contrary! But you must not take it too seriously. I'm not quite broke, as they say in England."

"Still, you'll let me be useful if——"

Luis nodded. The waiter had arrived with the drinks.

Luis was touched. He had never done for Steve anything that any big boy might not have done for any little one, any man for any youth. He had neither expected nor desired sympathy of the practical sort. At the same time arose the thought that Lady Ballantyre might find hope in the probability that her son's Socialism was lodged in a soft young heart, rather than in a hard young head.

When the waiter had retired the Socialist would have resumed at the point of interruption, but Luis cut in, saying: "You're a good fellow, Steve, and I shan't forget—but tell me now of your whaling trip."

"If you don't mind, it's a bit too recent to talk about. You know how I hate blood. But you've reminded me of something I meant to tell you. At dinner in the manager's chalet, last night, I met a man, another visitor, like myself, who knew you."

"An Englishman?"

"No, no—a countryman of yours. Sorry, I've left his card in my other clothes. Had I known you were to be here to-night, I should have asked him to come along. He spoke of a hunting holiday in the mountains, two summers ago." Steve took up his glass, not noticing his friend's sudden movement—the wince of one who has been pricked—and sipped his sherry as though he were not quite used to it.

"You don't happen to remember," Luis said slowly, "whether his name was Moncado, or Quintana?"

"No; but he was short and rather stout, and his English was not much better than my Spanish. Incidentally"—smiling—"I learned that one ought to address you as Don Luis."

Luis appeared to be thinking, not listening.

"I'll go up to my room and get his card," said Steve, setting down his glass.

"No, no! It was probably Moncado. There were four of us, and he was the only one who, I imagine, would be interested in whales." Abruptly Luis took a drink, showing neither pleasure nor dislike at the taste of the beverage. "Tell me," he went on, "did Moncado say much about our doings in the mountains?"

"He only mentioned that you were on holiday together. He did not talk as if you and he were intimate."

"No more we are—but that's not because he is anything but a very decent fellow. His father and mine were friends. He came to see us just at the time when my father looked like getting over his illness, and suggested my joining his hunting party; and I went off with him, there and then." Luis lifted his glass—and replaced it. "I should be a happier man to-day," he said heavily, "if I had stayed at home."

The younger man's look was all perplexity. "You speak as if there had been a tragedy," he said at last.

"I don't suppose I should have thought of telling you," said Luis, with a small pained smile, "if you had not got at my heart, a minute ago; and it is only selfishness that decides me to tell you now. But I want to tell someone who has known me for a long time; someone who will give me his honest view, as one Englishman to another, on my

case." He took a deliberate look round the lounge. "There is no hurry, Steve. When you have finished your wine, we shall go outside. It is not that I dread being overheard here, but mine seems, somehow, a story for the open air." He put out his hand. "No; you must not insult Spain by gulping her wine—though, I fancy, you would get finer sherry in London."

A little later, seated on a bench in the garden, Luis began: "I am going to shock you, Steve—for you hate blood—but I shall not make a long tale of it. . . . It was towards the end of the excursion when, one evening, we camped near a certain village. Leaving the others to put things in shape, I went down to the village to buy provisions. On the outskirts I met a peasant girl, and inquired my way about. As well as some beauty, she had a sense of fun. Her Spanish was as queer to me as mine to her. We were amusing each other with misunderstandings when a man appeared from behind some rocks, close by, and strolled up to us. He was a huge brute of a fellow—would have made three of me—and had the surly look of a lately roused drunkard. But I wished him a polite *buenos noches*, and was putting my hand to my hip, where I carried my cigar-case, when I noticed the girl's eyes warning me fearfully. She was, in fact, going to bolt when he caught her by the arm, hurting her, for she screamed and struggled. Then he opened his mouth, and I knew enough Spanish to gather that his words to her were most grossly insulting. The rest happened quickly. Something boiled up in me. My right hand was not on the cigar-case, but on the haft of my hunting-knife. I struck him in the face with my left, and when he turned gnashing on me, thrust the knife into his chest. He fell—and died almost at once."

Silence . . . till from the younger man burst the horrified whisper, "But, Luis, that was murder!"

"I was afraid you would call it that," said Luis, and waited for him to edge away.

But Steve's horror had been for the deed, not the doer, and presently his hand took hold of the other's elbow.

"I'm sorry I said that just now. But it was a most awful thing to happen, Luis. Perhaps they would call it homicide or something. It was certainly not ordinary mur—— What did you do?"

"Nothing, at first. I stood staring at the girl—not at the man. Her mouth was open, wide. It was like that for quite a long time. I remember wondering when she was going to give the alarm. But no sound came out, and, at last, it closed. She looked around, carefully, to satisfy herself, I suppose, that there had been no witnesses, for soon she nodded to herself. "Will you not go?" she said, evidently not realising with her elementary intelligence that it would be the maddest thing I could do. When I answered "No," she thought awhile and then acted. The man in dying had rolled over on his face. She stooped, took his knife from his belt and dropped it on the ground. Rising, she did a thing that revolted me. Lightly, but quite deliberately she kicked the body. Then she warned me that she was going to scream—and she did! . . . People came. She explained that the man had first assaulted her, then attacked me—she pointed to his knife—and that I had struck in self-defence——"

"Well, so you did," said Steve hopefully.

Luis shook his head. "It was nothing but sudden hate and passion. The man was unarmed. . . . Apparently the girl was a favourite in the village, and he the reverse, for there was next to no indignation. But, of course, I was arrested and taken to the nearest town, where I had an unpleasant enough experience. On learning that the man had been the misery of his wife and family, as well as of several unfortunate girls, I offered to make provision for the woman and children. My offer seemed to strike the authorities as generous; they accepted it, along with the forsworn testimony of the girl; and after some tedious formalities I found myself free—free in every way, save from memory. . . . That is all, Steve."

"Poor old Señor! It must be a dreadful thing to carry always."

"Oh, I don't exactly live with it. I do forget it for periods; but it usually comes back when I would"—Luis smiled sadly—"lift up my heart, as it were. In the War I killed, or meant to kill, no end of men, probably better fellows than myself, and never felt ashamed; but the killing of that peasant, though he was surely a worthless beast, is going to hold me down for ever."

"No, no, Luis; it won't be so bad as that!" Intended as a confident prediction, it sounded like a pious wish, even in his own ears, and Steve hurried on to ask: "But what about the girl? Did she expect any—reward?"

"I don't know. Naturally, I thought of it, but it seemed too dangerous, on her account, as well as mine. You see, she had perjured herself—though I'm not certain that perjury is taken so seriously in those parts as in

England. Anyway, I gave her nothing, and have not seen her since."

"She asked for nothing?"

"She has asked for nothing—thus far. But one never knows when a thing of that sort is finished."

"And will you?"

"I must. My father left him quite enough to live on, and he is bound to have saved. But what would it matter if he gave me away? I have no one to be affected by such a scandal—no one in Spain."



"'In other words,' said Luis slowly, 'your ancestor was murd——'"

"I think you may reckon that it is finished and done with by now," said Steve. "Does anyone outside of the place where it happened—anyone besides your hunting friends—know of it? Did you tell your father?"

"No. He had a bad relapse when I got home—so bad that I could not get away to attend to the legal part of the compensation business, and had to get his secretary to carry it through."

"Is that the deaf and dumb fellow you once told us of?"

"Yes. He's capable enough."

"And you could trust him?"

"I could." Luis shrugged. "I fancy he likes me less since my father's estate turned out so badly—but it may be only imagination. Naturally he fears that I shall dispense with him as soon as his present task is finished."

"Still——" Steve left the remark in the air, and made another. "It must be difficult working with a chap who can neither hear nor speak."

"Not so difficult when you are used to it. There is no waste of words. He writes when signs won't serve; he reads one's lips and, I think, some of one's thoughts also. Oh, Gaspar Muñez made an admirable helper to a student and dreamer like my father, and the dust of research has not muddied his brain. Were I a little better off I should not think of parting with him."

"Well, anyway," said Steve, breaking away from the sordid subject, "I'm glad you have decided to come with us in August."

"Have I decided—and if I have, are you quite sure you are glad, old man?"

"Don't be an ass! What you need is a change of scene and atmosphere, and you'll

get it on the *Miranda*. Have an English cigarette ! "

They had smoked awhile in silence when Luis remarked :

" There is one thing I should say before I shut down the lid for good. I have not told Lady Ballantyre."

" And why on earth should you ? " Steve was grown up again. " It isn't a thing for a woman to know—a woman like my mother, at any rate."

" No doubt you are right," Luis admitted, his air suggesting resignation rather than relief. " Well, let us get back to—Tobermory."

About eight o'clock Lady Ballantyre joined

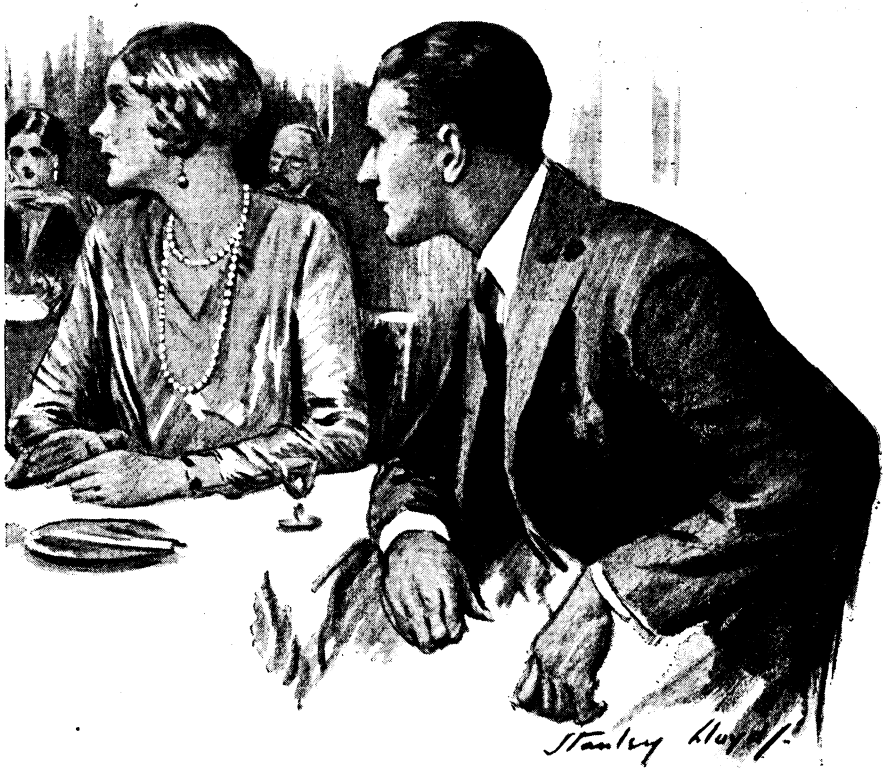
" Steve, you might have given the Señor a cocktail, even if you don't approve of such things."

" As a matter of fact," he answered, " I wanted one myself, but the Señor didn't."

" Since when, may I know, have you acquired the taste ? " she asked, with a slight frown.

" It is one of the little experiences I have still to acquire," he said, smiling. " Will you join me, Mother ? "

" You—and the Señor also—know very well that I detest the things," she retorted. " They are too unhealthy even in an unhealthy age. They have done to our country more hurt than our other debt to America, and all the stupid people I know love them."



them in the lounge. She wore black, and her fairness seemed to shine ; her blue eyes held no hint of anxiety or fatigue. There was a graciousness in her proud carriage, and a dignity that even the short skirt could not qualify. To the women the question of her age was, doubtless, an immediate one ; to the men it came probably as an afterthought. Some of them knew who she was, for the Reina Cristina is an English hotel patronized mainly by Britons.

" And so," remarked the Señor, " Lady Ballantyre thought I ought to have one ! "

She laughed, saying, " Hospitality covers a multitude of crimes. Let us be hospitable, though the guest should die ! I know you don't like cocktails. But seriously, Steve, it is early enough for you to take to what somebody has called aptly, if a trifle coarsely, ' the mixed swill of a mixed society.' I'd rather——"

"Righto!" Steve muttered, reddening boyishly.

"At dinner I shall ask the Señor to choose an honest wine of Spain——"

"You are less graceful than usual," Luis put in, sorry for Steve. "Would not 'a wine of honest Spain,' have been more complimentary to the country to which you insist I belong?"

"Corrected again!" She spoke with the half-pleasant impatience of one whose nerves are frayed, and rose. As they moved in the direction of the dining-room, however, she pressed her son's arm, whispering, "Never mind, old boy!"—and Luis, seeing and hearing, loved her a little more.

Perhaps the atmosphere least oppressive to people troubled about many things is that of a luxury restaurant; it has an anæsthetic effect on the cares of the solitary diner, a distracting one on those of the couple, or party; it may, indeed, induce a certain gaiety even before the wine has been opened.

"What did you two idlers discuss while I was attending to business?" Lady Ballantyre inquired, when they were seated. "Whales?"

"Tobermory," answered Luis, "and the treasure that lies in the Bay. Steve has been telling me about it."

"I told him something of what Maclean told me last summer," said Steve, "that day we watched the diving going on. They thought they were coming to something then."

"They are always thinking that!" said the hostess. "They have been thinking it for years and years—the people who have spent money in seeking the treasure. My cousin declares that they have sunk more money than they could ever bring up. He does not believe that the old galleon was the pay-ship of the Armada, or that she was laden with chests of silver coins. He admits that she may have carried some sort of treasure, but has an idea—a very vague one—that it was brought ashore before she was blown up. He thinks that the searchers will continue to find—as they have found in the past—things of more or less value as curios—cannon, swords, plate, stray coins, and so forth—but nothing in the shape of a fortune."

"The biggest lot of money they have got so far was seventy—I think—pieces of silver," said Steve. "They were all together in the clay, and wonderfully fresh—some poor devil's little private hoard, from which the purse had rotted away. I suppose there are other lots lying around, waiting to be dredged."

"Sunken treasure, it would seem, appeals," remarked Luis, "to the practical, as well as the imaginative, mind. Some of my father's writings deal with the subject, but he was not practical. I must go more carefully through his papers and see whether he wrote anything about Tobermory. It would be interesting, if I discovered anything new, to discuss it with Mr. Maclean. Meanwhile, I am wondering where your cousin got his idea of a treasure being brought ashore before the disaster."

"It is a good example of the family legend," replied Lady Ballantyre, "which in this case seems to have developed round a scrap of parchment and a Spanish dagger. About the time of the ship's blowing up, a Maclean was found on the threshold of his house, with the scrap in his hand and the dagger in his heart."

"A Spanish dagger, you say?"

"There seems to be no doubt about it, so one must suppose that the deed was done by a Spaniard, though Spain and Scotland were not at war."

"In other words," said Luis slowly, "your ancestor was murd——"

"It doesn't follow," Steve quickly put in. "If one can believe half of the old stories, the Macleans were just as handy with their knives as the Spaniards. It may have been a private quarrel, and perhaps the Spaniard did not get away without a wound or two. There was a good deal of coming and going between the ship and the shore."

"In any case, Señor," Lady Ballantyre lightly observed, "my cousin has no feud against Spain as a whole, or any Spanish family in particular. When you meet him in August, he will, if you ask him, cheerfully show you both dagger and parchment."

"And what have they to do with the treasure?" Luis inquired.

"Goodness knows! The parchment is a dirty little fragment torn, or cut, from a larger piece, and the few words or signs, written on it—in Latin, I believe—are badly faded. Tradition has it, however, that the whole document had reference to the Spanish ship and her treasure, whatever it may have consisted of, and the whereabouts of the treasure after it was brought ashore."

"The whereabouts of the treasure to-day?"

"Oh, no! My cousin, shrewd man, has no dreams of that sort! His theory is to the effect that the owner of the dagger took away

the useful part of the document, and the treasure as well."

"And that's that!" said Steve. "And now, Señor, what about the wine of honest Spain?"

There was something of the big brother in Luis: he chose the lightest wine he knew.

Later, in the lounge, while Steve was making some inquiry at the bureau, Luis said:

"Lady, in two minutes I must be going. How long do you remain in Algeciras?"

"A week, perhaps. Steve wants to see some friends in Gibraltar, but I shall not go over with him. Probably he won't be away for more than two days."

"Even so, won't you be lonely? Why not go too? The steamer crosses the Bay in half an hour, I believe."

"I shan't go. I shan't be idle here. I have a good deal of business to think about and plan."

"You like that, of course! Pity me—I, who have business to think about, and hate it!"

"Can't you come again to Algeciras—for a day or two?"

He shook his head. "I must save up for August. You won't change your mind about the cruise and Tobermory, will you?"

It occurred to Lady Ballantyre that she might have to change many things, besides her mind, before August arrived; but she smiled as she said: "Unless you come to London a little earlier, I shall welcome you on the *Miranda*, in Oban Bay, on the second of August."

"In the morning?"

"By all means; but why?"

"The morning is not quite so far away as the evening." He said it so foolishly that she doubted whether, after all, he were in love with her. "Meanwhile,"—he rose—"good night! Don't come to the door. Steve will see me off."

"I wish you had not that wretchedly long night journey before you," she said. "I ought not to have sent you that wire."

"Send me another to-morrow, if you will."

The blue eyes met the dark ones and fell.

"I wonder just what you mean by that, Luis," she said faintly.

"Whatever you like, Lady," he answered gently, and left her.

THE OLD WAGGON.

LUMBERING, lumbering slow,
Went the old waggon down the street
Among swift shrieking things that tear
Heedless and petulant—and there
The brave old waggon needs must go
Calmly—piled high with mistletoe.

And once, in some West Country lane
Of gnarled grey-lichened apple trees,
On some gay poplar's mysteries
That silver-berried wonder grew.
Kissed by the sun, wooed by the rain,
Known intimately by the few,
But serenaded by the wren,
Or by a blackcap now and then.

Slowly, with many a groaning sigh
The waggon creaked and lumbered by.
And men, grey-bearded, calm, and wise
Had old dreams shining in their eyes.
Fine shingled ladies, here and there,
Paused at the pavement's edge to stare.

FAY INCHFAWN.

THE GLAD HAND

By HYLTON CLEAVER

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

I.

A GLEAMING coupé was just ahead of Bill.

He had kept close upon its tail for some time, since he loved nice hands, and from the window of that car one appeared at intervals and talked to him. He had been told: "Come hither," "Not so fast," and "Stop, sir!" It was a seductive hand, too, sheathed in a slim glove turned back at the wrist, that said it.

Finally it came out in indication of a turn in the affairs of Bill. He followed round the corner. He knew where the car belonged, and, when it pulled in to the kerb, that hand waved Bill ahead in sweet farewell. Bill smoothly passed. A hundred yards ahead he, too, pulled up, and, as he hopped out at his own place with a quick glance back, he was in time to see a slim shape in a grey costume, furs and felt hat, with super-silky stockings, run up the stone steps of a house.

To Bill, that evening, came Basil Whittington. He kept looking enigmatically at Bill, whose manner was that of a dog detected in the pantry.

"Bill," he said, "you are hiding something from me."

"All I have hidden from you is the whisky. That I always do."

"There's something more than that upon your mind."

Bill looked at him and moved with a furtive step. He raised the window and put out his head; the cold air rushed in, but he stayed there looking up the road. Basil joined him. He tried to put his head out too, and, as Bill tried to keep him back, there was a certain jockeying for position. Basil got there in the end like a dog squeezing through a fence, and stayed wedged in one corner, with his ear pressed hard against the bricks. Still, it amused him to pretend Bill hadn't inconvenienced him in the slightest.

"What do you expect to see?"

"I'm waiting for a lady."

"Oh, I thought it was a Punch and Judy show. How dull! What sort of lady?"

"There are two of them."

"A Siamese Twin phenomenon. That may be quite worth watching. How long do we wait?"

"They will come out," said Bill, "from *that* house, and will get into *that* car. They'll be in evening dress. They go out nearly every evening, and the girl who drives has hands I want to kiss. She has a curl combed out across her temple like a sort of——"

"Antler?"

"Antler!" Bill turned grimly. "What the devil do you mean?"

Basil drew a picture on the palm of one hand with a finger of the other.

"Do you know what a stag-beetle is?"

"Four or five nights a week," said Bill, ignoring him, "these girls go out, I tell you, after dinner, and I want to find out where they go."

"They are on the stage."

"They are not on the stage."

"They are programme girls."

"They are not programme girls."

"They are professional partners at the Palais de Danse."

"They are not professional dancing partners anywhere. Take a look at the house they live in, man. Do you know what I pay for this one floor? They have a whole house to themselves, and they have lady's maids."

"They *are* lady's maids."

"They are not lady's maids."

"Oh, well," said Basil vexedly, "at all events you hang out of this window and you wait for them to look up here at you."

"No, I do not wait for them to look up at me."

"That's just as well, or they would think it was a full moon every night, which would perplex them."

"I mean to get to know that girl," said Bill, "that's what."

"This double-faced one?"

"She's not double-faced. The other girl's entirely separate and distinct. This afternoon I happened to be coming home; she was in front of me, and every time she put her hand out I fell in love all over again."

"I don't like girls who're always putting out their hands," said Basil Whittington. "It's mercenary."

"The question is, 'Where do they go?'"

"Well, it does not require a great stretch of imagination to suppose that people who go out in evening dress, after it's too late for the theatres, go to dance. If you want to make their acquaintance I should advise you to discover where they go, then tootle off yourself."

"Great Scott, you couldn't *scrape* acquaintance with a girl like this!"

"Probably it's a club. In that case you could do it through the secretary."

"That," said Bill, "is just the devil of it. I don't dance."

It could be understood. Bill had returned home from abroad all out of fashion.

"Your case," said Basil, "is a hard one then. If you are led up to a girl, she is entitled to assume you can contribute to the pleasure of the evening."

Bill eyed him moodily, and turned away. A door had opened up the street. Two girls were coming down the steps, a maid preceding them. And oh, the last girl was so very lovely that Bill's eyes grew misty as he watched her. The door of the coupé opened and closed again; there came the buzz of the self-starter, the catch of the engine, and the rising drone as the car moved off. Bill followed its departure as though it had been a carrier pigeon with a message to his love, then he turned impressively to Basil and stayed thunderstruck.

Basil was whistling vacantly and looking down into an area.

"*Well?*"

"Oh," said the other, turning brightly, "are they coming out?"

Bill drew his head in and was within an ace of slamming down the window on the other's neck. Instead he clutched him by the coat and tugged him in.

"You didn't see her!"

"Never mind, they're all the same."

"They're not all the same, and here's another thing. When you are driving on the road, or on the golf-course, people try to cut in front of you; for all I know, they do the same in love. If it's so vital to the cause, you'd better teach me, I suppose, to dance. Can you do that?"

"Yes."

"Commence," said Bill.

Some time afterwards the people who lived underneath kept looking up in protest as their ceiling came away in segments; for Bill, who had never previously realised that you need double-jointed knees and flat feet if you wish to dance to-day, was keeping at it manfully. Basil, with hands upon Bill's shoulders, and with knees that stiffened and relaxed in time with his, propelled him round the room, counting the rhythm eagerly, and sometimes giving him a smart blow with the knee to keep him up to scratch.

II.

FOR ten days Bill had laboured.

Now he understood at last why trousers have become so full. The knee must have full play, and no knee should have fuller play than his. In fact, on setting out to-night Bill had remarked to Basil: "There is one thing, anyway. In this get-up, I could drop on my knees before her and yet my trouser-legs would still be standing up."

He had followed that alluring hand to-night, and Basil had been proved a clever prophet, for the girls *did* go to a club, a dance club of the most select and proper order, and he had sped home, dressed at top speed, whilst with the other hand he rang up Basil and instructed him to come immediately.

They arrived in Bond Street side by side and secured admittance to the salon by explaining they were just home from abroad and wanted membership. Then both laid silk hats reverently aside, and Bill's eyes fixed themselves upon a darling hand raised to a necklace. It was she. Bill had no eyes for her companion; it was as though he saw a lovely picture and was dimly conscious that in the corner of it was a smear; and that smear was the friend.

He asked the secretary and was told her name. Lois Saltoun.

"Mine," he said, "is Hedges. Say so, please."

Then Bill, with the widening eyes of the Pursuer, set out behind the other on the trek across that parquet desert. He was going to meet her now at last. He heard the secretary say his name was Haggis and did not correct him. He clicked his heels together as he had been told, bowed and allowed his features to relax. ("Don't look as though you've got a thistle underneath

your vest," Basil had said, "nothing creates a worse impression of inferiority.")

Then, as she raised her eyes to his, the lights, smack, bang, went out.

Now, there is nothing indecisive about electric light; one moment it is on, the next it isn't; there is no semi-tone.

Bill's foot was in mid-air, about to step up, so to speak, and take his prize. He checked, the wall, apologised, turned wretchedly, and blundered back; this he did rather better since he had the high-pitched voice of a girl who had been close to Lois to guide him.

"I say," he began, addressing darkness, "are you the girl I was just going to meet?"

A voice replied: "Are you the man who had just been led up?"



"Bill clicked his heels together as he had been told, bowed and allowed his features to relax."

then turned as though to say: "Who did that? I say, stop it, will you?"

He heard whispered laughter, thrilled remarks, inquiries; then there was pregnant silence whilst the secretary struck a match and fell across a chair.

It is extremely difficult, of course, to carry on a conversation with a girl whom, strictly speaking, you have not yet met; especially when, in addition, you can't even see her. Bill was about to speak, but turned and started blundering across the floor to hunt the secretary and complain. He hit

"That's right." He paused. "How do you do?"

He put his hand out courteously and, after waving it about a moment, he, to his thrilling joy, found a hand coming into his. No living man could have had any doubt whose hand it was: it had talked to him from a window; he had known how it would feel; yet now he had it in his own he was too doped with satisfaction to size up the vital import of it. He only knew that it was softly cool and yielding; it was ineffably responsive; it was the kind of hand which

with a touch can cure a headache. He heard a low laugh; once the hand essayed to leave his; he held on. He said:

"Is there a chair beside you?"

"I believe there is."

He sought it, with that cool hand guiding him, and he was in the very act of sitting down when he received his second blow. His name was called excitedly across the floor.

impatiently excused himself and went across the darkness towards Basil's voice. Basil had a match held to his chin to light the way. He had a tense look, and he had his hat on; as Bill reached him he pulled Bill's hat also from behind his back and clapped it on Bill's head; he then seized Bill's arm and dragged him along the passage.

"Come on, we're getting out."

Bill had gone stumbling crossly after him



"I want you, Bill!"

"I can't come."

"Yes, you must!"

Bill's hand tightened once more round those fingers and he felt response; then he as far as the street before he could stop; then, like a jibbing horse, he dug his hoofs in and said heatedly:

"What's all this nonsense?"

"Raid."

" I feel no rain. Do blow your nose."

" Why do lights go out suddenly in clubs ? The police, you ass. We'd better run for it. You go one way and I another."

" And we had better change hats, I suppose," said Bill indignantly, " and stick a tuft of grass between our upper lips and noses, and put on our coats, I dare say, back to front ? I'm going back, at any rate. If it's a raid, then what about those girls ? "

" They're all right, man. They're members. But we're not."

" But this is not a night-club ; no one's drinking anything but lemonade."

" Not in full view, of course. All that is going on behind the scenes."

He turned and pushed his hat well down upon his ears preparatory to running. As chance would have it, at that moment there passed a posse of police in single file ; they were going on duty and one fell behind at the corner to peer at them. That was enough for Basil. He smote Bill on the arm, said in a high-pitched voice : " You're *HE* ! " and bounded from the spot. Bill watched him hurtle out of sight with flying coat-tails. For a while he stood there, realising petulantly that as he certainly was not a member it was not much use his trying to get back into the club, or not just yet. So, with his hat sloped far back on his head and hands in pockets, he walked gloomily towards his own club in Piccadilly, where he considered he would get a drink. It seemed to him that Basil was a crassly stupid guide to have on journeys which, according to the book, should end in lovers' meetings.

As he left the alley and turned again down Bond Street, one odd thing deserved remark.

Basil, who had doubled quickly round a block, leaning well over to maintain his speed on curves, now reappeared, sidling along the wall, and, unobserved by Bill, he tiptoed back and, like a scorched cat, went upstairs again. By the time he arrived the lights were on once more, and he walked blandly in. He fixed his eyes on Lois Saltoun, who was standing up to slip an exotic cloak about her alabaster shoulders. She had eyes no amount of decorum could quite rob of seductiveness, and now that Basil faced her with brows lifted into points and a face like a cloud about to burst, she smiled at him sedately.

" Yes, I *thought* I saw you putting your nose through the curtains a quarter of an hour ago. What are *you* doing here ? "

Basil collected himself, and with hands on hips said :

" Good evening, Lois. You are wondering who put the lights out. I did. You are much surprised to see me. I am just as staggered to see you. I came this evening with a man who thinks, poor devil, that he is in love with somebody. Only when I arrived here *did I find that it was you.*"

" What fun ! "

" I don't agree. For one awful moment I was at my wits' end how to save him. Then above my head I saw the main switch and I pulled. By now the man is walking home, feeling that life is nothing but a vast leg-pulling enterprise of which he is the butt. And I," he added, " Lois, have come back to have this out with you."

III.

It was the next day.

Bill was driving with one eye upon the road ahead and one aimed to his left ; and, as the traffic stopped ahead of him, he leaned across and got his hand out through his left-hand window.

From the right-hand window of the car beside him hung a fair hand like a drooping flower, and his fingers, reaching out, enfolded it delightedly. The owner of it turned, and a slowly dawning smile softened the corners of a red mouth that was much more eloquent than eyes can ever be.

" I don't imagine," Bill said, " you regard *me* in a very kindly light to-day."

Lois had propped a soft round chin upon the knuckles of the hand she had withdrawn from Bill's.

" Last night I can't say I regarded you in any light at all."

" What happened ? Was it," Bill inquired, " a raid ? "

" Somebody switched the lights off, I believe."

" But what occurred ? I understood it was the police."

" I didn't see any. But my friend and I left shortly after you."

Bill looked puzzled.

" Did you just walk out ? "

" That's all."

" I went back, and I met the fellow I was with. He told me everyone had gone, but I imagined they all left together. It looks as though I was deceived. Tell you the truth, I don't know much about these raids. I'm just home from abroad, and things have altered. Still, I'm glad you got away.

Tell me, did you have time to see, before the lights failed, *who I was* ? "

" Yes, just."

" You knew me, did you ? "

" Well, I had sometimes seen a face," said Lois, " hiding amongst the green stuff sprouting from your window-box when I drove down the road, and I imagined——".

" Quite right, that was I. Well, I've been learning to dance," said Bill, " and why ? I have been wanting all the time to dance with you."

" Then those are just about the saddest words of tongue or pen," said Lois sympathetically. " It might have been, but I don't dance."

Bill stared incredulously.

" P'raps I ought to say I *can't*," she added, as the policeman's arm dropped, " or not at all events with you."

The policeman stepped aside, and she looked back once as she started on.

" I've promised that I won't."

He still stared after her with a face like a question mark in ice, and then with agitated hands and feet he scrambled back behind his wheel and started in irascible pursuit, with that expression one sees in the eyes of cyclists leaning over handle-bars to get more speed.

She had a clear start on an open road ; he saw her turn, and before he could disentangle himself from a brewer's dray, her car stopped outside her house and she had darted up the steps. Her key was in the lock as he went by ; she turned to look back once ; and any young man who is human knows the pulsing joy of just one backward cheeky look from a door about to close.

And this was the next thing.

In his hall lay a note.

He was invited to a small informal dance across the road that evening by Mary Dudeney, who was evidently that smear in the corner of the lovely picture. She referred to last night's ruined introduction to Lois and expressed the hope that he would come across that evening and complete it. Evidently it was her house. Lois must be staying there. He wrinkled up his eyes in thought.

Well, there was one thing more alluring than the idea of a dance with Lois, and one only—at the moment. He would go there, *and sit out* with her.

Early that same evening Basil Whittington received a 'phone call. It was Lois speaking.

" I thought it was only fair to let you know," said she, " your friend is coming across to-night, and so you'd better come along yourself and lead him out again."

Bill had a special shave that night, and to enjoy a shave is a sure sign things are shaping well for you.

He crossed the road melodiously humming.

Presently he had met Miss Dudeney and had been led by her from girl to girl, in front of each of whom he had allowed his features to relax.

But he could not see Lois anywhere. He did not like to ask for her, and so, when she at last appeared, he was already dancing round with silly little flinging side-steps and a shudder at each corner, and when he saw her he nearly dropped his partner and ran to her in delight.

She had been cutting sandwiches, no doubt, and putting out the drinks.

He finished out the dance as best he could, excused himself, and crossed to her.

" Now we are going to revive the lost art," he explained, " of conversation. We are going to sit out all the rest together."

" I'm afraid we can't do that."

" But you don't dance ? "

" The others do."

" I've done my duty. I have danced with all of them."

" There is Miss Dudeney."

" Yes, I've danced with her."

" Then be a good chap," Lois said, " and go on doing it."

" Listen. I came here," Bill replied, " solely because you said you couldn't dance with me. I took it that you would at least sit out."

" People are looking at you."

" Why ? Have I a comic notice on my coat-tails ? "

" No, you are very much too ardent."

" You," said he, " are much too harsh. You asked me over here——"

" Miss Dudeney asked you."

" But," said Bill, " with your approval, I presume ? I had hoped it was almost at your instigation."

" Not at all."

Bill stared. Lois was looking round as though for some excuse to move away. He felt his lips grow tight.

" Well, then——" he said.

Then the door-bell rang, and whilst Bill waited Lois turned. The room door opened

in due course and on the threshold stood Basil with a tense look, hat in hand, just as he had appeared the previous evening, save that now he could be seen by all.

"Ah, Bill," he said, "I want you."

"You'll be unlucky."

"You're coming out with me. I promised you would come along. Don't you remember, this is the 18th? I was amazed when your servant told me you were over here. Why, fancy you forgetting!"

Bill said grimly:

"What on earth are you talking about?"

"I've come to fetch you."

"You can go away, then. I'm not coming."

"Oh, I do wish," Lois mentioned, "you would not attract so much attention, both of you."

Bill turned, somewhat nettled.

"Would you like me to *go*?"

"No, I should like you to stay here and dance with Miss Dudeney, who as a matter of fact is listening and is waiting for you now."

"I stay here," Bill said firmly, "and sit out with you or else—I go."

"I can't help thinking that distinctly rude."

He might have answered he had heard that rude men made the most successful lovers, but he turned instead.

"Very well, Basil, I will come with you."

When he took off his shoes that night he threw each heavily upon the floor. He tore his collar from his stud as though it were a weed. He sat in bed, his jaw protruding, and he smoked, with folded arms and crossed feet, filling the room with fumes, and ultimately biting through his pipe. And if that isn't a sure sign of thwarted love, what is?

IV.

THE window of Bill's flat stood permanently open, and had done so for a week, and *every time* a car went by a grey drawn face appeared, suggesting that somebody was a tortured prisoner in the tower.

From within the room the view was something similar and yet, of course, reversed. One saw the window-box one moment, and the next it was obscured by Bill's hind parts as he thrust out his head upon a telescopic neck. Basil Whittington had stood it for a fair time, but he kicked at last.

"I'd better *tell* you, Bill, it's no use going on like that. You'll never see her any more. She's gone."

Bill drew his head in, turned and stared at Basil with green eyes.

"GONE? Where? Gone when? Gone why?"

"I don't know when or where. She went because of you, and so you needn't keep on bobbing in and out of that window like a cuckoo in a clock. She and Miss Dudeney had a row about you. Lois rang me up and said so, but I didn't quite know how to break the news—till now."

Bill came closer, full of menace.

"What row?"

"I don't know the details, but it was because you went across that evening and left because she wouldn't sit out with you. Miss Dudeney pitched into Lois about it, and so Lois answered back, and then left in a huff next day, taking the car and all."

"How do you know all this?"

"She rang me up and said so."

"Then didn't you ask her where she was?"

"No, I did not," said Basil. "I knew Lois long before you did, and I proposed to her approximately seven times; she led me on, then made a fool of me; and other men have suffered in the same way, too. I didn't ask her where she was because it isn't good for you to know. You are well out of it. In a case like yours, it hurts the more if you find out later."

Bill came nearer still.

"Would you mind explaining what on earth you mean?"

"I mean this. *I* put the lights out that night at the club, and I went back and cautioned her. I said you thought you were in love with her and she must bring you to your senses, because you were a fellow who took this sort of thing with an undue solemnity, and who *believed* in women."

"Oh, and was it you," asked Bill, "who made her promise not to dance with me?"

"It was."

Bill looked all round him with a lunging movement as though seeking something he could make into a weapon, and noting his excited glare, Basil went to the door with all the speed he could command, and out of it. Bill flew to the window and was just in time to see him sprinting madly down the road, lifting his knees as high as his chin and fighting with one arm to get more speed whilst the other was in an attitude of self-defence behind him. Bill made one threatening gesture with his arms and Basil bounded

like a dog behind whom something in a tin can has exploded. But Bill stayed there boiling.

Then a curious change came over his expression. His eyes protruded and his chin dropped. Down the road, quite slowly, came a coupé, and from one window came a hand that literally and in fact pointed the way to heaven. Bill watched it strangely as it turned the corner. For the moment he could not think what to do, and as he waited, racking his brains, the car showed that it had gone round three sides of a small square, for it appeared again, like a prowling taxi, and on this occasion Bill moved. *His* car was in the street. He went down those stairs touching every fifth step only with his feet, and from his front door he leapt straight into his seat. He thrust his hair back from his face, and as the engine started he stepped on the gas.

At the same moment, for the third time, the coupé appeared, and seeing him, the driver speeded up. Bill tried hard to get alongside, but the exigencies of traffic forced Bill back, where he decided to remain; he wanted to find out what Lois was up to.

Just then they passed Basil Whittington on the kerb; he saw a signalling hand out of the window of one car and he saw a nose pressed up against the wind-screen of the other; that was enough for him; he hailed a taxi and he added himself to the procession.

Lois pulled up in Knightsbridge and stepped out.



"A shadow fell across the table. . . . It was Basil looking down at him like a master who has found boys smoking. 'What,' he said, 'are you two doing here?'"

Bill leapt out behind her, skidding on the pavement, and capering alongside like a puppy.

"Please," he said, hat in hand, "where are you going now?"

"I am going out to tea."

"May I come too?"

"To tell you the truth," said she, "I led you here. You wanted, didn't you, to dance? You shall, just once, before I go."

"Go where?"

"I'm leaving London."

He glanced at the cars. If anyone desired to shift them, let them. He must be with Lois; he went with her, listening attentively; and as they passed into the hotel, Basil, who had left his taxi, stood staring after them.

Bill was in heaven. He sat down by her and he loved the way her chin was resting on her wrist.

"You aren't afraid to be alone with me?"

"I am afraid only that you will go too soon."

"You have been warned, you know. You risk it?"

Bill offered her a cigarette. He said:

"You told me once you'd promised not to dance with me. Did you mean you had promised that ass Basil Whittington?"

"I meant it was my duty."

"Why, what on earth," Bill asked her blankly, "do you mean?"

"Basil," she answered, poking with a menu at a teacup, "told you, I think, that he had tried to marry me. It was a whim I couldn't gratify, and so he made his mind up I was heartless until you came along; then the idea occurred to him that p'raps I meant to marry and settle down and he determined to have one more shot himself. I fancy he forgot, though, that when he knew me before I was a rather rich young person and could afford to find out what store people set by my income before I decided whether they were nice to know. I haven't that income now."

"What's happened to it?"

"It went," she said with one sad gesture, "in Victor oil. All I saved from the wreckage is my car, and I've been using that to take Americans about on tour, and make a living. Miss Dudeney is American. She took that furnished house and wanted me to go and live with her and be her social secretary, chauffeuse, and companion all in one. In the circumstances it was only proper that I shouldn't dance unless she was already dancing; and should introduce to her the men I met. That night at the house, you upset everything. I had some rather hard words flung at me, and so I packed and came away next day, and now I'm going to my sister in the country."

"You are not," said Bill.

"I am, but I did want to say good-bye to you, and to explain, and if you liked I thought I would dance with you once before I went, to show it wasn't that I wouldn't . . . but I couldn't at the time."

Bill leaned upon his elbows.

"When last did you think of getting married?"

She looked up suddenly, half smiled, looked down again.

"Oh, well, it's cropped up once or twice . . . but chiefly through the agency of Basil."

"If you could think of it again, quite seriously, and we put our heads together . . ."

She was utterly adorable; her chin, soft mouth, seductive eyes, the sly shape of her hat, intoxicated him.

"I am supposed to be," said she, "a girl who can't make up her mind. One of these days I'm going to show the people who think so that . . . they're wrong; I'm going to meet and marry a man all in about five minutes, and never regret it."

"Think fast," said Bill.

"I've made my mind up now. I'm going to my sister in the country."

"And," said Bill, "when you come back——?"

A shadow fell across the table and he raised his eyes. It was Basil looking down like a master who has found boys smoking.

"What," he said, "are you two doing here?"

Bill turned to Lois; then he reached out his hand, and felt for hers beneath the table; his fingers closed; her hand came into his and lay there trustingly.

With a disordered heart-beat Bill arranged his mouth.

His throat felt dry.

"Basil, I thank you," he remarked, "for giving me the hand you have."

"What hand?"

"The night that you left us together in the dark, you gave me just the hand I wanted." Then he paused. There was a curious expression in his eyes; her hand was still in his and he was feeling it, but he appeared perplexed; he raised his eyes to hers intently. "I suppose," he said, "it *was* your hand that night . . .?"

"No, and that's just what caused it all," said she. "It was Miss Dudeney's, and it was the first time I'd been jealous in my life."

SIR HAMILTON HARTY

A PERSONAL STUDY OF A GREAT CONDUCTOR

By WATSON LYLE

MY recollections of the conductor of the Hallé Orchestra carry me back to a Christmas Eve dinner during the most anxious middle period of the War, when he, a well-known pianist, a less famous violinist, and myself, were guests of the same officers' mess at a depôt in South-East London. The fact that a heavy air-raid was in progress did not concern the jovial crew one whit, and as the evening went on one was freer to enjoy the company of the friends one particularly wished to see. Jazz had not "arrived" then, but ragtime was popular, and the pianist—who is best known to concert-goers as an exponent of the later romantics and the moderns—was brilliantly playing a syncopated favourite of the moment, decorating the bald tune with elaborate trills and a burlesque cadenza, to the unbounded enjoyment of a knot of admirers clustered round the instrument. On a settee, somewhat apart, sat Harty, apparently as remote in thought as in position. His serenity might have remained unruffled but for the fact that the violinist suddenly determined to get himself into the picture too. Placing a chair quite near to the pianist, in fact, directly behind him, he prepared to mount it, his violin and bow in one hand, a glass half filled with whisky and soda in the other, and announced that he would deliver a speech. To heighten the effect, literally and figuratively, somebody obligingly placed a yule log on the seat for the orator, who was soon unsteadily poised upon it. Waving his arms in approved Hyde Park Corner fashion, he began to speak, when suddenly the log toppled over, and the contents of the glass spilled right down the pianist's neck. He immediately jumped up and ran clear of the danger zone, head downwards, while the liquid trickled through his hair, to be wiped off with his handkerchief. Amidst the laughter, questions and apologies that ensued, Harty retained his composure outwardly, but the real Hibernian love of anything in the nature of a shindy glinted, humorously, from his clear blue eyes.

It was characteristic of him to take the incident in that way. He likes a joke, and is as fond of fun as any of his race—one might guess as much from the high arch of his eyebrows—but an innate reserve makes him averse from public fuss and flurry. Tall, well-built, and well-groomed, he is a dignified figure alike in public and in private life. Of recent years his straight, iron-grey hair, brushed back from his broad forehead, has become lighter and whiter; the passage of time seems otherwise to have left him untouched. The important position he has occupied in the musical world since he became conductor of the Hallé Orchestra has necessitated headquarters in Manchester, but his love for his native land draws him back to the Ould Counthry with magnetic insistence whenever the chance occurs, to revive memories of the early years before that time when, like most artists at some period or other of their development, he found himself in London.

Hamilton Herbert Harty was born on December 4th, 1880, at Hillsborough, Co. Down, Ireland. His youth was spent in the North of Ireland, near to the shores of Lough Neagh, the grey, sombre waters of which seem to stretch for miles towards vague, mist-wreathed shores. Lying at full length upon its moss-grown banks, the boy would listen sometimes to the stories of old Patsy,

the fiddler, who lived in a lonely cottage there, and had plenty of things to tell about the time when Ireland was at its magical, romantic best. A favourite story was one about the great city, with its cathedrals and palaces, said by tradition to lie buried beneath the waters of the Lough, and the tinkling of whose bells is superstitiously believed to sound from the dark depths of the water on misty, quiet nights, while overhead the plovers cry eerily. As readers will remember, this legend of a submerged town, with ghostly, tolling bells, is told of a part of the coast of Belgium. Debussy was prompted by it to write his "La Cathédrale Engloutie," for pianoforte. Harty has based the first movement of his Irish Symphony on this kindred "motive."

There were more cheerful associations than the melancholy proximity of the Lough for the composer in embryo—the excitements of the local fair-days, with the advent of the horse-dealers—links, if decidedly tarnished ones, with the outer world, and their plunging, kicking animals, and the loud voices and oaths of the men worked into Celtic frenzy by the incidents of buying and selling. Then there were the side-shows and coco-nut shies, and the recruiting serjeant, busily engaged in talking over the likely country lads into taking the King's shilling. One day while Harty wandered on the Antrim hills an experience happened that made a deep impression upon him. Finding he had lost his bearings, he went to a little thatched house to ask his way. The woman who opened the door was weeping bitterly. Inside, upon a bed, lay a young girl, white and still, her golden hair spread upon the pillow, a crucifix on her breast. A young man sat beside the corpse regarding it in stony silence. Around were gathered the men and women attending this "wake" that he had unwittingly intruded upon. Turning from the door, he prepared to leave the house of sorrow, the wailing sounds of the lament for the dead following him, wraith-like, into the darkness. He was not allowed to go alone. The young man who, he learnt as they walked along together, had been betrothed to the dead girl, offered to show him the way. The poor lad had gone off to improve his position, and, returning to claim his bride, found that Death had forestalled him. The following day was July 12th, the day when the Protestant North celebrates the Battle of the Boyne, the celebrations generally terminating in a good deal of rioting, and sometimes bloodshed. But, for once, the uproar was brought to a truce by the appearance of the simple funeral cortège of the dead girl, slowly wending its way to the Roman Catholic burial-ground.

If one reflects upon the fierce hatreds that boil up at such times, the beauty and the wonder of this temporary peace or spiritual armistice will be more fully understood. Not until the coffin was decently interred, and the service over, did the mob relapse from its seemly behaviour. Passing the place of burial that night, Harty saw the grief-stricken swain lying prone across the newly-made grave. This episode also the composer enshrined in later years within the emotional content of his Irish Symphony.

But the boy had many experiences to go through before any or all of them could be given forth in terms of his art. Like our greatest living English composer, Elgar, Harty is mainly self-taught. He may be said to have begun his professional career when only twelve years of age with an appointment as organist in a village church in County Antrim. As soon as he could he went to Dublin, to the Royal Irish Academy of Music, where he became a pupil of Michele Esposito. The fame of the master has been overshadowed by that of the pupil, but the pupil has more than once paid graceful tribute to his teacher by giving performances of his music.

Launching upon his professional career in earnest, Harty gravitated to London in 1900, with a reputation as an accompanist, and also as a composer of songs which, at first, tended to be of the popular ballad type. His gifts as an accompanist soon made him prominent in the metropolis and in the provinces. The assistance "at the piano" of the young Irishman was eagerly sought by singers anxious for the success of their recitals. His playing had (and has) a fire, and yet a judicious restraint, that got the most out of songs and singers. If memory serves, it was at this stage in his professional life that he met the singer, Miss Agnes Nicholls, whom he married in 1904. One of his most charming songs, "Rose Madness," a passionate little composition, spontaneous and free as the bubbling of a mountain brook, bears the simple dedication "To A. N." Continuing his work as accompanist, composer, and pianist in chamber music performances, Harty in time began to make appearances as conductor, proving his mettle in this branch of music by repeated concerts with the London Symphony Orchestra, and by fulfilling engagements as conductor at orchestral concerts given by various instrumentalists apart from existing orchestral

concert organisations. By the autumn of 1920 he took up one of the most important appointments in this country as permanent conductor of the Hallé Orchestra, Manchester, an orchestra with which the names of several men famous in the history of music —Hallé, Cowen (happily still much alive) and Richter—are linked. Fresh with the responsibility of his new position, and occupied with ambitions for increasing the prestige of his new charge, Harty made a reappearance in London as conductor in the last month of that year (1920) at a concert of the Royal Philharmonic Society in Queen's Hall, and again in the following February. His Violin Concerto in D was given by the Society during the intervening month, January, 1921. In 1923 he was made a C.B.E., and two years later was given a knighthood in recognition of his services to music. In the same year he was created a Mus. Doc. of Trinity College, Dublin.



[*Guttenberg, Manchester.*

SIR HAMILTON HARTY.

Every winter Sir Hamilton conducts between sixty and seventy concerts of the Hallé Orchestra (some of which are broadcast), and when one takes into consideration all that is implied by this bare fact—the planning of programmes well in advance, the reading of new works of which but few are found to be worth retaining, the selection of soloists, and

the hard work of the rehearsals themselves—it will be understood that his job is no sinecure. In the choice of new works it is symptomatic of his fair-mindedness that he will sometimes put aside for rehearsal and public performance a composition that he personally does not like, but at the same time feels he does not properly understand, in order to discover how the public receives the piece, and thus prevent his quite personal dislike from barring a hearing for its composer. Outside Strauss and Elgar, his faith in contemporary composers of established reputation does not appear to be wide, although to his credit is due the first full concert performance of Bantock's "The Song of Songs," which was given by the Hallé Concerts Society on March 10th, 1927, about nine months before the opera was broadcast from 2LO. He has done much to gain performances for the works of Berlioz, in whose music, unlike most musicians, he is greatly interested. Handel represents another of his enthusiasms, his arrangement for small orchestra of six of the numbers from the original twenty-one of "The Water Music" forming a favourite item at concerts, while a "Rigaudon," "Arietta," "Hornpipe," and "Passacaglia" of Handel's have been arranged into an oft-played suite for violin and piano by Harty. More recent is his transcription of the "Music for the Royal Fireworks," written by Handel for the celebration of the Peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, in the Green Park on October 7th, 1748. This was given its first performance in London, in Harty's arrangement, under his direction at Queen's Hall on January 21st, 1925, at the same concert that served to introduce to the metropolis his "Irish Symphony," a fine work of typically Celtic thought and emotion, to which reference has already been made.

One of his earliest large works for orchestra, his sparkling "Comedy Overture," first performed at a Promenade concert on October 24th, 1907, retains its place in the affections of the public, and is more frequently performed by other conductors—notably by Sir Henry Wood—than by its creator. The stirring tone-poem, "With the Wild Geese," is also frequently heard, and has been broadcast a number of times; but another large work, for chorus and orchestra, "The Mystic Trumpeter," has not achieved anything like the same popularity. It seems scarcely necessary to state that an Irishman so conscious of the beautiful in sound has given us his own particular conception of "The Londonderry Air." There is also a concerto in B minor for piano and orchestra, while his smaller instrumental works and songs are so many, running into about three figures numerically, that there is no space to mention more than a very few. There is, for instance, the charming little "Papillons" for 'cello and piano that is often played by recitalists; an "Orientale" for oboe and piano that is delightful, but exotically Hibernian! For these two instruments he has also written a lovely "Chansonette" which is the essence of sincerity. An early work (1903) not much heard now is the Romance and Scherzo for 'cello and piano dedicated to W. H. Squire.

Harty's choice of verses for his songs often lights upon the mystical and the bizarre, like "The Wake Feast," "The Stranger's Grave"—which is about an unknown, drowned man who lies buried in a graveyard on Inishmaan, dedicated (otherwise) to the interment of unbaptised babies—and the vagrant spirit of "Sea Wrack," or the dreamy beauty of the "Scythe Song." His creative art in this form always claims our admiration by its melodic charm, and the sure knowledge of the needs of voice and instrument that is the outcome of his wide, practical experience, plus his inspiration. He is a Celt to his finger-tips, whether these fingers are busy writing down the notation of some new composition or are manipulating the conductor's bâton with sure, steady, rhythmic command. His musical gifts are twin in importance, and it would be hard to say whether he is greater as conductor or as composer. Other notable conductors there are who compose, but unequally to their conducting—Weingartner, for instance; and therefore notable composers whose conducting is of secondary importance, such as Strauss. By this I do not wish to imply that Harty's creative bent possesses the bigness or even the technical facility of Strauss'; nor yet, in Beethoven at least, that he has quite the conductor's penetration of Weingartner. I merely wish to emphasise that in the Irish artist these twin gifts both reach a very high level indeed, which fact is, in itself, rare.

Watching him to-day, as he directs his large orchestra of experienced musicians, one wonders if the brilliant, sensitive conductor gives much thought to the dreamy Irish boy, whose love of music, poetry, and romance, and all these things as they are blended in Nature, was first awakened while he lay stretched idly upon the mossy banks of Lough Neagh, listening to the fiddling and the folk-tales of a lame old Irishman.



ON THE FROZEN WHITE SEA.
Note the crevice in the foreground.

LOST ON THE FROZEN WHITE SEA

By ANDREW SOUTAR

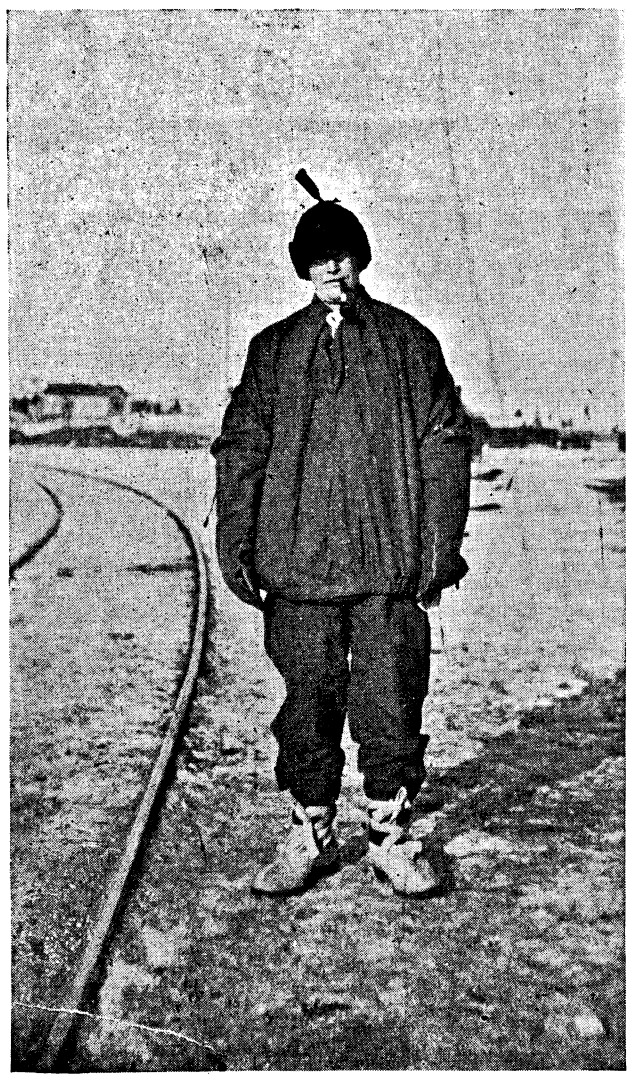
WE were to lose no time in getting from Murmansk (the only ice-free port in North Russia) to Archangel, 500 miles south and 300 east; that is, from the foot of the Kola Peninsula, then straight across the map, following the snow trail that was "blazed" five hundred years ago. Winter, with all its horrors in that latitude, was beginning to relax its iron grip, and soon the snow trail would be rendered impassable—the snow would soften and give beneath the weight of the ponies and sleighs. Also, there was a human element that constituted a menace, if not a danger: the Bolsheviks had pushed their patrols up from the south and there had been many ambushes on the trail.

It was in the early spring immediately following the Armistice. No sooner was I demobilised than I was invited to go to North Russia as war correspondent. Frankly, I accepted with alacrity. Wanderlust and, possibly, a morbid passion for "strange places where strange things happen," moved me. I say, now, that the thrills of a Portuguese revolution, the storm of a Japanese riot (after the declaration of peace with the Russians twenty years ago), and all the rest of an adventurous life, didn't fill me to the brim so surely as this affair. I've had some experiences in the Far East that should have satisfied me—piratical raids down the Manchurian fringe, spasmodic affairs in Kowloon when the Chinamen have kicked against the "foreign devil," but this Russian business embraced aspects that were totally different and much more exacting of a fellow's courage.

If there is anything that can be designated "remarkable" about the North Russian Expedition of 1918–19, it is the fact that

those who comprised it are the only persons who seem to know anything about it. The newspapers hadn't very much space to spare for it; they were so engrossed in the more pleasurable work of celebrating the end of the war in Europe.

Briefly, the position was this. During the War we had supplied Russia with millions of pounds' worth of munitions. They had been poured into the country through that ice-free port of Murmansk (you may remember that Lord Kitchener was on his way to this port when he met his death through the sinking of the *Hampshire*); they had been taken down to Archangel and stored on the islet of Bahkaritza, which lies at the mouth of the River Dwina. Peace having come in Europe, Mr. Winston Churchill, then Secretary for War, concentrated on an effort to save that material. In Russia, the "Reds" had assumed command, and he knew that they wouldn't recognise the debt. We were not the only creditors. The French and the Americans had allowed Russia to run up a bill. The Serbians and the Poles were with us, too. We didn't save even a rifle from the Bahkaritza dump: we had to evacuate at the end of August, 1919, but that has nothing to do with the story of the snow trail that follows.



THE AUTHOR, EQUIPPED FOR THE SNOW TRAIL.

There were seven of us in the little convoy, including two invaluable batmen who had been ordered to report at the Archangel headquarters. Glad we were to leave Murmansk, which is little more than a collection of black, wooden huts, and where, in those days, one walked about with a hand on the butt of a revolver. Winter there is one long night, the darkness relieved only by the brilliant Northern Lights which flash and shimmer across the sky. The temperature up there had been fiendishly low, and we craved for the little warmth that we might find in a lower latitude.

There is a single track railway that runs from Murmansk to Soroka, 500 miles due south down the Kola Peninsula. That line was built by German and Austrian prisoners during the war, and lies on frozen tundra or swamp, so that when winter departs the railway goes with it, or, rather, becomes impossible of usage.

That long rail journey went far towards crushing our enthusiasm for travel. There were only four or five cumbersome luggage vans, and the engine, fed with wood fuel, seldom achieved a greater speed than twelve



REINDEER TRANSPORT.

miles an hour. When we ran head on to a snow-storm the speed dropped as low as seven miles an hour.

In the North, we had joyed in the use of reindeer transport, and the little Lapps—peaceful and industrious fellows who live by barter and hate the Russians although they are near relations—had shown us some sterling sport in the snow. We had become quite attached to the reindeer—docile beasts and tractable, although they are in a semi-wild condition. Three form a team; one single rein fastened to the head of the 'deer on the left-hand side is sufficient to guide the others, running abreast, the Lapp driver flicking the rein over the others' heads if he wishes to turn right; a fourth animal is tied behind the ridiculously small sleigh, so that when the team is likely to be overwhelmed in dashing down a declivity, the fourth acts as a brake by pulling back . . . and has its head pulled almost off for its offices!

Yes, we had enjoyed some adventures in the North, although they had alternated with periods of acute depression—indeed, the majority of our "casualties" among the Expeditionary Force in Murmansk were cases of melancholia. That state of things was due to the long nights (there was only an hour a day during the intense darkness that was relieved by a faint blue twilight; even then it was necessary to use candles in order to see across the mess-room). In the summer, of course, there was continuous daylight, and that recalls a tragi-comedy which occurred when first the expedition went out.



THE UNION JACK AT MURMANSK.



RUSSIAN VILLAGE CHILDREN.

The transport, *City of Marseilles*, arrived with a crew of Lascar firemen. It was the first time they had ventured into Polar regions, and the continuous daylight wrought the tragedy. The Fast of Ramazan had to be observed. No good Mahommedan must eat between sunrise and sunset during the Fast. The Lascars came on deck about the time when the sun should be taking its leave : they were hungry, and there was the sun ! shining as brilliantly as ever. They had to wait, thinking that the clocks on board had played them a scurvy trick. Valiantly, they fought against the pains of hunger, but the sun was obdurate and refused to go down.

They waited upon the captain to see if he could do anything in the matter, and his impotency sent them to the British Vice-Consul, whc could suggest only the great alternative : If they wished to eat, they must forget the Fast. *He* couldn't push the sun down from its appointed place !

Seventeen Lascars died for their religion ; the apostasy of the others is probably pardoned ere now . . .

It took the lumbering train three or four days and nights to get to Soroka, where we began the sleigh journey east—450 versts. We had ten sleighs, five for the baggage and rations, the others for personal use. There was a Russian driver to each sleigh, but he had little to do save sing in that doleful, mournful manner peculiar to the Russian. The ponies, the most intelligent creatures in Russia, followed the trail without guidance, needing only the soft call of " Per-oo ! " to steady and reassure them when they were going down a declivity. The expression is used to stop an animal as well as to reassure it.

The sleighs had nothing in common with those delightful pictures of childhood. You know —those daintily fashioned sleighs, with bells a-jingling. These were mere oblong boxes, like nothing so much as a lidless coffin. Certainly, they were comfortable : senna grass, or coarse hay, gathered from the tundra in summer time, was laid at the bottom, and on this the passenger lay his full length, his furs piled about him. Frequently, when the cold became so intense that the mercury must have dropped out of the bottom of the glass, the driver would get in and lie next to his passenger, the two huddling together for warmth.

The danger from frost-bite was great, and no more terrible affliction can be endured. There comes a sharp tingling sensation, almost like the touch of a white-hot needle. It is then that one must apply warmth to the part by withdrawing a hand from a glove and pressing it on the spot for a second, changing hands as often as possible. If this is not



A GIRL SLEIGH DRIVER.

done, the affected part will suddenly become numb, the pain will go, and the erroneous impression is that the " bite " has departed. The truth is that the dreaded thing has happened. Frost-bite eats away the flesh !

We attained no speed to speak of, the ponies being allowed to lope along at their own gait. We slept for hours at a stretch, for there is only the one trail and no danger of taking a wrong turning. Once or twice roving bands of Bolsheviks kept us guessing, but they served to keep the blood circulating. Once, a trapper came out of the forest and almost took a dose of lead because we were rather strung up about that time. He was a finely built giant with only one craving, one desire : whisky ! He brought to the convoy as fine a bear-pelt as I had seen, and offered to barter it for one bottle of whisky —or rum. As we had only one bottle among us, and there were hundreds of versts still to be covered, we had to refuse. We couldn't drink a bear-pelt !

After many days and nights we arrived at



MOSQUITO VEIL WORN BY TROOPS IN SUMMER TIME.



A BOLSHEVIK.

This photograph was taken immediately before his execution as a spy.

Onega, a small fishing village on the edge of the White Sea (now frozen). We were worn out with the ordeal of continuous sleighing, minor mishaps such as being overturned into snowdrifts, and ponies trying to stand on their heads : but *thirst* had been the greatest hardship. Thirst on a snow trail with the temperature many degrees below zero ? The sands of Egypt had never created in me a greater desire to drink an ocean dry than did that snow trail.

We stayed a day and a night in Onega. As the little convoy formed into line to resume the journey a French officer came to warn us. Between Onega and Archangel, he said, there were roving bands of Bolsheviks : it were better that we waited a few days so that he could supply an escort. " You will never get through," he said. The Colonel in the first sleigh smiled as sweetly as a dentist on a nervous patient. " We'll try," he said, adding gently : " We're rather pressed for time." Satisfied that we were fools, the French officer saluted (as he would the passing of a hearse) and went away.

It was after leaving Onega that we ran into the blizzard !

The five-hundred-year-old trail winds and twists like a snake. Where the forests are thick and impenetrable, it wriggles out to sea—the frozen, silent, mysterious sea,

subdued by the higher elements to such an extent that the very breakers are caught in their curling and made rigid.

Suddenly the trail veered away from the land and made for the sea. For four miles the ponies headed north-east. Every half-mile a sprig of fir was stuck in the ice to mark the trail and guide the ponies. As far as the eye could reach the White Sea was a vast stretch of ice, silent as the grave, fearsome in its silence. Instinctively, one waited for the roof of the world to fall in.

Frequently we came upon deep and wide fissures in the ice, but we found that we could safely leave this danger to the ponies—the leader would throw up its head and swerve to right or left. Once I was awakened by a warning shout from the Colonel in the leading sleigh. I had been sleeping heavily, for we had passed through a trying night, when I heard: "Jump for it!"

My pony had reached a chasm in the ice, and was trying to free itself from the restraining hold of the driver, who had far less intelligence. I tumbled out of the sleigh at the moment when there came a terrible cracking. I leaped the crevice with greater agility that ever I showed in my schooldays, and looked back to see the pony swing away to the left and out towards the horizon. We waited for him, showing a lighted match now and then to guide him. He returned, after an unconscionably long while, and whimpered and whinnied with delight at having found himself with us again. If there is anything the Russian pony fears it is loneliness. The poor beggar must have covered 10 miles in its detour, and it was thoroughly exhausted when it reached us and rubbed its muzzle against my arm.

It was during the following night that we struck the blizzard, or when the blizzard struck us, as you will.

Again I was asleep when the alarm came—asleep and huddled up underneath the hay in the sleigh. I was heavily clothed at the time—uniform, windproof suit, fur overcoat, two pairs of gloves and leather gauntlets. This time it was the ponies that awakened me. They were screaming in terror, and added to the screams was the whining of the Russian drivers. They were peasants, these fellows, as simple as children—and as helpless in an emergency.

The instant the cacophony broke on my ears I thought that we had been ambushed by Bolsheviks, and even as I struggled to a sitting posture, I ripped off the gloves on my right hand and grasped my revolver. I rested my naked hand on the iron-lined edge of the sleigh. That act cost me more pain in the days that followed than I can well describe. I know this: one finger swelled to twice its normal size inside two hours, and the joints might have been working on broken glass! . . .



DOG TEAMS.

It was impossible to see anything. The blackness was like a wall into which one had run. Drivers and ponies were making so much noise that it was impossible to hail the other members of the convoy. And the wind was shrieking as I had never heard wind shriek.

A piece of ice, whipped and whirled off the frozen sea, struck me on the cheek as I pulled my Balaclava aside the better to hear any voice. I was grateful for the momentary

warmth caused by the blood as it gushed out, although even in that moment of crisis I realised the danger of broken skin.

All the ponies, in their terror, had swung around into a circle and the drivers were screaming like frightened children. There came an ominous cracking of ice. I heard the shout of the head of the convoy :

" Spread out ! Damn you ! " But there was no one there to interpret the order to the Russians.

I tried to swing my pony around, but he wouldn't have it : if he had to go under the ice he was going in company with the others.

When blizzards come in the grey light of noonday they are hard to combat ; when they race through the blackness of night and thrash and rage as though all the gnomes of Hell were the instigators, they inspire with fear that cannot be defined. It is a wrath that beats down the feeble resistance of man and screams derisively at his impotency as it beats.

The stars were shut out. They might have feared to look down on the sight. All the winds of the universe seemed to have conspired to entrap the little convoy : they swirled in a maelstrom of passion, shrieking and tearing ravenously at us. The ponies reared on their hindlegs, swerved, and came, again, into a c'rc'e. One of them broke away, screamed horribly, and came back to us with that awful *human* whine that I had learned to fear.

In the wind were scraps of ice that cut at us, fiendishly. Sometimes it was necessary to hold on to the sleigh to prevent oneself from being hurled into the blackness by the winds that were swirling around us.

One of the sleighs was overturned and the pony attached to it was flung into a frenzy.

For the Russian drivers I had nothing but contempt. One would have thought that, being accustomed to the trail, they would have some knowledge of how to combat such a contingency. But they might never have heard of a blizzard : they were more terrified than were the ponies, and their only desire was to crowd together and whine for help.

At last the wind died down as suddenly as it had arisen. An awful quiet rested on that vast sea of ice. The sensation was eerie for a moment : it was as though the gnomes were peering through the blackness to calculate the toll exacted.

There were no lights in the heaven to guide us. We were off the trail : and it was impossible to see the sprigs of fir that marked it. Vainly we fell back on the few Russian words that we had memorised in the North, but the natives were in such a state of nerves that they couldn't assimilate our mutilated expressions in their own language. The fact was quickly borne to us that they had lost the trail and hadn't the faintest idea of how to get back to it.

And we were at least four miles out to sea, and not so much as a speck of light showed where the land might be.



OFFICERS GOING TO OBSERVATION POSTS.

Note the corn. Six weeks previously the ground had been covered with snow.

We held a consultation, and went back to the Russian drivers who were huddled together about the sleighs. By gesture and broken phrase we ordered them to turn in the direction in which we believed the land to lie, but all that we could get out of the fellows was: "Niet dobra!" ("No good").

The ice had begun, again, to crack in a most awe-inspiring manner, and, angrily, I turned upon the men and told them in hearty and most fervent English exactly what I thought about their cowardice and their country.

We ordered them to get into the sleighs.



LAPP DRIVERS.

We tied the reins to the shafts so that they couldn't interfere with the project that had been devised. The ponies were drawn into line; every man took his place. Then, striking the leading pony a sharp blow, we gave it its head and it darted forwards into the blackness, followed immediately by the others.

We reasoned that if the trail was to be picked up again, it would be by the ponies themselves; the scent of the droppings on the trail would almost certainly guide them.

It was a grim ride in the blackness. A rider in one sleigh could not see one in front or behind. We knew there were hundreds of crevices down any one of which we might be precipitated, but the only thing to do was to hold on to the sleigh and leave the rest to the sagacity of the pony pulling it.

Instead of turning in the direction where we believed the land to lie the leading pony headed farther out to sea!

We had begun to doubt the wisdom of the strategy employed, when the leader dropped out of the mad gallop, grunted in a satisfied sort of way, and passed the grunt along as it were.

He had found the trail!

We halted, held another conference, served out a short ration of "fire water," then, still relying on the intelligence of the ponies, resumed the journey.

Three hours later we sighted a speck of light, away to the right. The ponies were as cheered as we. Another burst and we reached the snow-covered land, dragged a laborious way through a forest and arrived at a small post-house, kept by a dissolute, unwashed Russki who stared, critically, at us through the only eye that remained to him.

The eternal samovar was started: hot tea, just another tiny ration of "fire water," then into the sleeping-bags.

A MOTHER OF SARK

By G. B. LANCASTER

ILLUSTRATED BY T. H. ROBINSON

IT sometimes seemed to Madelon that she herself must have lived on Sark for a thousand years. In all those tough hard-working woman-bodies of her line the same soul must have loved and hated before it grew to love Sark earth as she did and hate Sark seas as she did.

Mostly the Sark women died widows of fishermen. Madelon could remember those old gnarled brown women, her mother, her mother's mother, and her mother's *gran-'mère*, with the coarse black wool nets on their white hair and heavy skirts kilted above their clumsy shoes. But she could not remember their men. There are so infinitely fewer old men than old women in the Channel Islands, and the sea knows why.

"Possibly these new motor-boats will make a difference," considered Madelon, loosing Charmante's head-rope preparatory to leading her back to the pasture. "But more probably devils are in them, for all Piare says. There are so many devils that are glad to find something to get into."

She gathered the ropes of Charmante and Fleurie in one brown strong hand, and stepped out of the shed into the sunshine. Under the apple-tree by the stone gate-post Jeanne was talking to Beauce Vidome who was on his way down the steep Smugglers' Path to the fishing. Grain ran unheeded from Jeanne's chicken-bowl, and apple-tree shadows on her pink face and dress gave her a half-bold, half-reticent look. Beauce was wholly bold—red-brown skin, blue-jerseyed limbs sturdy and short, bright dark acquisitive eyes. His hand held Jeanne's on the gate-top.

It was the moment Madelon had dreaded since, sixteen years before, Jeanne had been born to her—herself a girl in her teens—while a wet wild storm swept up the Coupée and along the rocky heights and Piare was somewhere out beyond the breakers in his boat. There she had lain in the low stone cottage, on the green bed—that national, ceremonial bed of branches and hay boxed in by a railing—and heard the wind go by, salt with surf, and the sea pound the rocks far below, and the uneasy whispering of the old women. She had raised herself.

"My baby shall not marry a fisherman. Fishermen are accursed of God and their wives also," she had cried to them.

"Hush! What sacrilege! And you perhaps already a widow," her mother had scolded her. "The wickedness of you, Madelon, when all the world knows that *le bon Dieu* takes fishermen to himself sooner than any others."

"My baby shall not marry one," muttered Madelon, and lay weeping, less for Piare, although she shuddered at the blasts as though each stove in his riding boat, than for this soft defenceless morsel which she had borne to endure the same terrors.

And here stood Jeanne under the apple-tree, listening to the love-talk of the fisherman Beauce Vidome.

Old Vidome and his elder son came tramping by with creels and nets and fishy smell. Beauce went off with them, swinging down the steep path where, on certain nights of the year, a file of headless smugglers passed silently. Madelon had never seen them, but she knew that they came, just as she knew what had come to Jeanne who turned at her voice with a scarlet face and downcast eyes.

"Beauce," said Madelon relentlessly, "is a fisherman. What is it then that I have taught to you, Jeanne?"

Jeanne would one day be like other Sark women: big-boned, brown and early wrinkled. But she was frail yet, soft-skinned, timorous and thin, with no pro-

mise of Madelon's flashing black-browed splendour.

"I love him," she whispered. And then, in answer to Madelon's "Pcha!" she roused like a young sparrow fronting an eagle. "But I love him, maman, and one cannot help love. I would rather have the right to fear for Beauce than marry some fat Guernsey farmer with his tomatoes and grapes in glass houses and his daffodils grown in rows for the English markets."

"Sark women do not marry out of Sark. You are mad. But there are several . . . the schoolmaster would have you. And Nicholas L'Eclet, who runs twelve head of cattle, is looking your way. If I could give you a proper *dot* . . ."

"I do not want a *dot*. I want Beauce." Jeanne held the hand he had fondled against her flushed cheek as though it steadied her. About her feet the chickens pecked unheeded, and the great fawn cows with their mild eyes and deep udders looked at her quietly. "I understand what it is to have a man at the sea. Is not my father——?"

"You understand! Bah! Charmante knows more of life than you do."

"I can learn," pleaded Jeanne. "Beauce will help me."

"Help you! *Le bon Dieu*, be good to us! When did a man ever help a woman except to sorrow!"

"Mother!" cried Jeanne, startled. "You never spoke like this to me before."

Madelon turned a sudden hot look on the poor yard with its one pig, its handful of mongrel fowls, its unpainted half-door and timbers to the little cottage. Her glance went on over the gorse and fern of the hill where a merry girl who had been herself once went blackberrying with the man who had helped her to sorrow.

"There never was need before. All fishermen are cut of the same cloth, Jeanne. Their blood is sea-water and their wits wind. Wait, and I will get together a fine *dot* for you, *petite*, and you shall marry on the land. Scarcely sixteen you are yet."

"Other girls marry at sixteen. And Beauce is good and a hard worker. Even you can't say harm of him, mother."

Madelon's sharp eyes and tongue could scourge, as all Sark knew. But she had nothing against Beauce Vidome except that he would put the soft neck of her darling under the same heavy yoke borne by most of the women she knew.

"Assuredly Beauce works—to fill his stomach. And assuredly girls marry at sixteen. And at twenty-six they are old women, gathering the *vraic venant* on the tide to manure the fields, and tending a peck of children, and cutting bracken for beds. And already perhaps they are widows, living from hand to mouth and thankful when folk staying at the *Seigneurie* or the hotels send them washing."

"It would be different with Beauce and me."

A thin wind sang in the grass and stirred the thick hair on Madelon's burnt forehead. She stared hopelessly at her daughter as one generation has always stared at another, impotent to guide or to understand what it never knew or has long since forgotten.

"Every pair of lovers says that, and it never was true yet. If I had saved enough for the little Martel farm as your *dot*, Jeanne, Beauce could leave the sea and breed cattle like Nicholas L'Eclet. But fortunes never came out of lobster-pots yet. Dame! Sooner would I see you in your grave than married to Beauce as he is now!"

"And soon will I be in my grave if I may not marry him."

Steeped in superstition as Sark folk for a thousand years have been steeped to the thick black eyebrows, they faced each other, trembling, for surely those Things that lived on Herm and Jethou would attend to this defiance. Ghost-things, shadow-things that made clouds in a clear sky suddenly, or shot an arrow of wind over a sleeping sea to drown a passing boat. Devil-things cast out by the saints who had inhabited those heaps of barrenness long before they retreated to Guernsey, leaving near-by Sark to these tempests and fogs which came from no natural cause.

"I mean it," said Jeanne, overcoming her trembling. She walked out of the sunny yard into the low darks of the cottage; and Madelon took the cows to the tiny field behind and drove the iron grazing-pins with the wooden mallet, allowing each cow the bare range of fourteen feet from the edge of the last pasture, as Channel Island cows have been grazed for uncounted centuries. Next to Jeanne she loved her cows, for they were an integral part of Sark.

Piare was coming up the Smugglers' Path. Between the proud little alders and oaks he walked like an old man—and he not forty! Madelon took a breath that sent her bust out and her shoulders back in unconscious protest. Any check to this threatening disaster must come from her alone. And what could she do? That slow hoard gathering



" It was the moment Madelon had dreaded since, sixteen years before, Jeanne had been born to her."

in the black worsted stocking in the chimney-place must go for Piare's new boat. His first boat had been her dowry, and he had neglected and worn it out just as he had done with her. But his dark eyes were mild and a little suffering as they met hers now. His wet trousers flapped against the thin, bent legs.

"She leaks, the old *crapaud*," he said dispiritedly. "It is well the pots were near empty or they would have sunk her. I had only six crabs to put in the *nourrice*."

He trudged on, heavy with a long night's labour, rimed with salt that had dried on him in the wind and sun. Madelon looked after him with passion. Why should Piare have the new boat and Jeanne no *dot* with which to take the Martel farm to Beauce? *Certainement* there was not yet enough in the stocking to get the farm, even on a big mortgage; but in two years, perhaps, with the cows paying as they did . . . Madelon closed her eyes. Even though she starved the house, denied Piare that coat of paint which the old *crapaud* craved, she would not be quick enough. Jeanne would not wait two years. Nor one. She knew, for Jeanne was her daughter, and she had not waited.

It had never been Piare who had been importunate. Piare had not even been jealous when Gavin Grouille died, leaving Fleurie to her, although the women who had been her friends as girls whispered among themselves at this proof of Gavin's constancy.

"I'd like to leave you some land if it didn't have to go with the family, Madelon," Gavin had said. "But there's a fortune in Fleurie if you breed her right. She was sired by May Day."

Well, for all her ignorance, she had made the cow pay. And Beauce had helped, insisting that she should keep Charmante.

"You have something good in that one there," he had said. "Regard then her colour and the line of her back and the flat flanks, extraordinary in so little a calf. One day she will be on the Advanced Register, that one."

At two and a half years Charmante was already there, and for that Madelon must thank Beauce. But for the sudden glow on Jeanne's face she gave him no thanks when he edged in through the blue twilight, later, to sit an hour in the chimney-place, waiting to go round the nets with Piare. He had fallen into the habit of doing this each Thursday, asking no payment. Asking none? Dame! He was taking it without the asking! Madelon's despairing heart knew it, while the two sat close and awkward with occasional giggles, and she washed the coarse blue and yellow *potage* bowls at the shelf, and Piare winced and muttered in his sleep at the drive of the wind and the crash of surf far below.

Piare had worn out Madelon's love, but he was her man still, and she could never face a night of storm and he in it without fear. Was it then to be that Jeanne, her jealously shielded Jeanne, must bear that wife-burden? Must stand, perhaps, with whipped hair and wild eyes among the other wives while some red morning discovered stove-in boats high among the rocks in the heaped and scurfy spray? Piare awoke with a cry.

"*Dieu!* I thought we were sinking off the Casquettes," he said. He drew his legs in, blinking round with bleary eyes. "She will drown me yet, the old *crapaud*," he said.

"That is wicked talk," answered Madelon bluntly. "Trust God."

"Lanoe will sell his motor-boat for five hundred dollars. She is big, but Dylan would help me run her."

"Would Dylan also help you to the five hundred dollars?"

Piare pulled his ragged moustache. Jeanne's young body hid the stone that hid the stocking in the chimney; but neither she nor Beauce thought of that, nor would until the magic was spent and marriage had cleared their eyes.

"How much is there in the stocking?" he asked presently.

"Not yet enough for Jeanne's *dot*." Madelon had made her decision suddenly. "Would you have her go to her husband penniless?"

"Her—husband?" His inquiring eyes, following the impatient wave of her hand, blinked. He looked slightly surprised, then foolishly fond. "The little cabbage," he murmured.

Madelon ground her strong teeth. In another moment Piare would embrace them both, and then the fat would be in the fire.

"Beauce," she said sharply, "are you ready? Monsieur waits."

Jeanne moved, tranced and dewy. And now Beauce was at her ear with his hot eyes and young-man importunity.

"You see how it is with us, madame. It cannot be otherwise. Soon you will give her to me, is it not?"

More confidence than pleading in that triumphant tone. It is never the men who think of the morrow. Madelon did not

answer, and the two went out laughing. Piare would be complaisant, Madelon knew. Promise anything, foresee nothing. Grimly she sat down to patch a blanket with stiffened fingers which had raked seaweed out of the surf all the morning, roped it and dragged it up the steep cliffs to spread on the little field. Jeanne hung about, tremulous and wistful, needing, as all young things need in their great moments, a mother-breast to weep upon. But Madelon could not give it.

She sat like some dark Destiny, stitching on Jeanne's fate; and presently the young girl drifted up the stone stair, and the kitchen was silent except for the tick-tock of the old wooden clock and the click of Madelon's needle. For hours she sat almost motionless, patching garments, and gradually a plan was conceived and born of her great love and her pain. Adrienne Guitry had spoken of the new man buying cattle in Guernsey —cattle for America, with pedigrees and Advanced Register records. The dealers would not tell him of Charmante, for Madelon never sold her calves through dealers. It followed, then, that she must go in the steamer to St. Peter-Port and bring the man to see Charmante—and Jeanne.

In her intense hatred of the sea she had never crossed those few tumbling grey miles between the two islands. She had prayed that she never might, just as she had prayed that she might never have to sell Charmante nor see Jeanne go from her to suffer as she had suffered. Now she meant to achieve all these things of her own will. *Le bon Dieu* would laugh!

In the heel of the stair Jeanne showed in her nightgown, dim and white like fog. She was speaking of fog. "But observe *la brouille*, maman. It has come like blankets to the door."

Madelon had not noticed its coming, nor the going of the wind. Her mind had ceased to register changes when her heart stopped aching for Piare, but now her brown lips lengthened in a hard line. So Jeanne was feeling the torment already? *Bien.* Let her feel.

"They were going round by the Bresquenne Rocks, maman?"

"Yes."

"It is bad there in the bays—*la brouille.*"

"Yes."

Pale and dim, Jeanne stared down with large eyes. Madelon went on stitching. Let her know it now. Dame . . . let her know!

"It will be a thousand times worse when you are a wife. When you have a child at your breast it will be worse still."

Jeanne turned and went silently up the stair. Madelon flung down the old shirt she was patching, and sat with clenched hands. And her heart was torn open in her.

In her decent black gown and straw hat she walked on the next afternoon down the steep ways past the hotel and through the tunnelled rocks to the little blue harbour. Jeanne stayed sulking at home because Madelon would not take her to Guernsey; but Madelon, while believing that the sight of her darling would immediately remove any difficulty about persuading the buyer, knew that terror for Jeanne upon the sea would unnerve her. Besides, the pain of extracting steamer-fare and the price of a night's lodging for one from the black stocking had been severe enough. She could not double the expense.

A wet salty wind brought the tang of blossomed gorse and of cowbreath as she crossed the little field which, with the cottage, they held on three-months' rental. With Charmante sold and the old *crapaud* growing daily more rickety, it might not be possible to keep the rental up; but Madelon would not take herself and Piare to the Martel farm with Jeanne, even supposing Charmante bought it and the black stocking stocked it. In the intense domesticity of French life such occurrences were ordinary. Everywhere old folk kept the young folk down, as she and Piare had been kept down with *la mère* and *gran'mère* and *great-gran-'mère*, all gaping toothless mouths in the chimney-place for food. Jeanne should never be so kept down.

"I could wash for the tourists," she thought as a laughing crowd of them passed her with their day's gleanings of foxglove, scabious and fern, their blackberry-stained mouths. "And always there are artists, even if they do not look very rich or clean."

The sickness of fear overcame her as she stepped on the shining, smelling steamer and felt it throb beneath her feet. She sat rigid on a narrow seat, with closed eyes, like something hacked from a plank of dark wood. Hearing the tourists speak of Herm later, she unglued her stiff lids and saw it, shapeless and leaping, among grey billows. Her head spun. She had never doubted the virility of devils, conscious of the number that beset herself, but assuredly Herm had let loose a regiment of devils to-day. And other things, too. Lost wild lonely Things that mourned

in the wind and across the sea, breathing despair and desolation.

When she landed on the cold and windy wharf of St. Peter-Port, Madelon felt that she had plumbed misery. And yet all was to do still. In the steep and narrow High Street, crooked as a dog's leg, were more devils. Motors that hooted—and Madelon had never seen one before. Tall carts with plunging horses. More people than she had realised that the world held. Strange bright clothes and uncovered legs. Dazzling windows full of unbelievable articles.

She did not differentiate these things. She walked through them as one walks through a nightmare, dimly conscious as we all are in nightmares that it could not last.

"Wilbur?" she inquired of every man who would stop for her. "Le Monsieur John Wilbur of America?"

At last she found him: up the dirty stone stair of a dealer with whom he was completing a purchase, and in a little office full of tobacco-smoke. She saw a young alert face rising up as she went through with the formula she had memorised, but what Wilbur saw prevented him from heeding much of her speech. If she had said, "I am a woman driven by whips. Love has put me in hell," he would have believed her. If she had said, "I am a dethroned queen," he could very nearly have believed that too. Battered by cold, sickness, and most utter terror, she faced him with a composure and a decision that were royal. This attempt to sell cattle to him in a cattle-dealer's own office seemed neither amusing nor impertinent under the intense light of her desire.

"When you see Jeanne," she kept insisting, "you will understand that she must not suffer as I have suffered." And then: "When you see Charmante . . ."

Sark had not been included in Wilbur's schedule, nor had he intended to buy another cow. Yet he went back with Madelon next day.

Sark interested him, as Madelon had done. Himself, its rugged heights and flattened cottages and quiet people seemed to say, would only be tolerated here for so long as it took him to buy Charmante and go. He and all the outer world were alien. Sark stood like Madelon—alone. The aloof independence of this spot of earth, which a man could walk round in an hour, delighted the American. Although English-ruled since the Conquest, Sark was still French to the core. Although under the Guernsey bailiwick, it had its own stern laws. No tourist might bring a motor on the island, nor a female dog. The black hounds that nosed Wilbur's boots were as distinctive as the people. The slow low vehicles had as much character.

Between the stone floor and heavy rafters of a kitchen a thin, awkward girl stared through peat-smoke. "This is Jeanne," said Madelon, husky with pride. She took him to the poor shed behind. "This is Charmante," she said, and uncovered her as though she were Crown Jewels.

Wilbur saw a fine young Guernsey, undoubtedly well bred, but nothing to write home about. Nothing worth all the trouble he had gone to, especially with this rising wind which promised to make the return trip specially horrible. He felt cheated somehow, conscious that he had been made ridiculous.

"And now that you have seen both," said Madelon, "you understand."

She looked at him with those tragic, hungry eyes, and his own young frank ones fell.

"Why . . . she's quite a nice cow," he hesitated.

"She had already made 497·23 lbs. of butterfat, and her sire is Sark Pride. We do not like our best cattle to go foreign, but it is only the best will bring the prices. Martel would not mortgage the farm for less than £200 down, so I must ask that for Charmante. And there will be other things for the marriage, naturally."

"Naturally," agreed Wilbur. His wonder as to what stuff Madelon's husband and prospective son-in-law were made of kept him evasive. He did not mean to buy Charmante, but he would rather like to see these men who did not think it necessary to root for their womenkind as men should. "I must think it over," he said. And then, seeing her face go grey, added hastily: "Perhaps if you would give me something to eat . . ."

Piare and Beauce came in before he had finished the bread and cheese and the milkless tea. For Channel Islanders never drink their cows' milk nor think to offer it. Some scare of tuberculosis in the dim past works in their slow brains yet, just as dread of the sea worked in Madelon and acceptance of the inevitable in Piare.

Despite the wind, Piare and Beauce were going to set nets from the old *crapaud*, and they ate standing, laughing at Jeanne's fears. Madelon said nothing. She fed them, got out the extra woollens Piare asked for, and cut the great hunks of dark bread that would

stay them through the night. It was clear to Wilbur that for the younger man everything was just now for the best in the best of all possible worlds, and for the elder neither pain nor pleasure had ever been very acute. Jeanne was no more than an inexperienced child, and it was this dark Fate of a woman who brought the whole business into focus and intensity, who was raising to the plane of tragedy an ordinary enough episode.

Wilbur knew that the refusal he must give her would be a frightful moment to them both; but he had no right to buy such as Charmante for his Company, the tally being already full. It was merely his interest in Madelon . . . he tried painfully to explain when she took him to the yard again, and then she stood in the bleak wind staring from the dark caverns of her eyes. The wind blew her black woollen skirts against her, and she was firm like a tree. A deep-breasted, strong-flanked woman, savage with mother-love. She spoke hurriedly.

"But perhaps it is that you did not observe the yellow inside the ear and at root of the tail? It is the butter sign, that. Her skin is silk, too, and the marking of the best. There is no such cow for gentleness. . . . Charmante! Charmante! Look at the monsieur, *chérie*."

Charmanté turned her soft full eyes on Wilbur, chewing peacefully. Madelon's brown, veined hand went lingeringly over the beautiful body-lines. Wilbur said on impulse:

"Means a lot to you, doesn't she?"

Madelon put that aside with a closing of the lips. She said:

"Possibly I go to be uncivil, monsieur. You must bear with me. Figure to yourself the life of a woman here with her man always at the sea, and you will understand that Jeanne could not live through it. She does not know that; and the men—what do they know! She is so young, the little one. But the temper of love is on those two, and if I deny them there will surely be disaster. It happens like that. And so I say to you, buy Charmante, and she will serve you well. And I will put you for ever in my prayers."

"I'd do a good deal for that, ma'am," said Wilbur sincerely. "And for you too. But I can't buy the cow."

"If—if I asked a little less. . . ."

"No, ma'am. I've bought all I'm authorised for. If she'd been a real ringer I might have considered myself justified in overstepping the mark, maybe. I'm sorry. . . ."

He got himself away without meeting her look fully. He walked for a while between dusty birch and briar hedges without knowing where he went. Twice he cursed himself abruptly. Why had he let himself in for a thing like this? The woman's face was certain to haunt him. Past the red-and-white and flower-girt Hotel Belle Vue, he got down to the harbour at last, and found that the boat had left nearly an hour before. Attempts to hire a motor-boat were abortive, and sulkily he re-climbed the steep road between great trees, with an increasing wind swinging the long blackberry suckers above him and screaming through the dried bracken on the hills.

Outside the hotel he hesitated. Perhaps if he could get Madelon to put him up for the night, pay her well, or even leave a roll of notes with the girl, it would ease his conscience a bit. Absurd that he should feel that way about it—but there it was. A pin-prick of a tragedy on a pin-prick of earth, and yet he knew that not all America would be big enough to make him forget it. No: not a pin-prick of a tragedy. That woman stood for the mother-passion of the world.

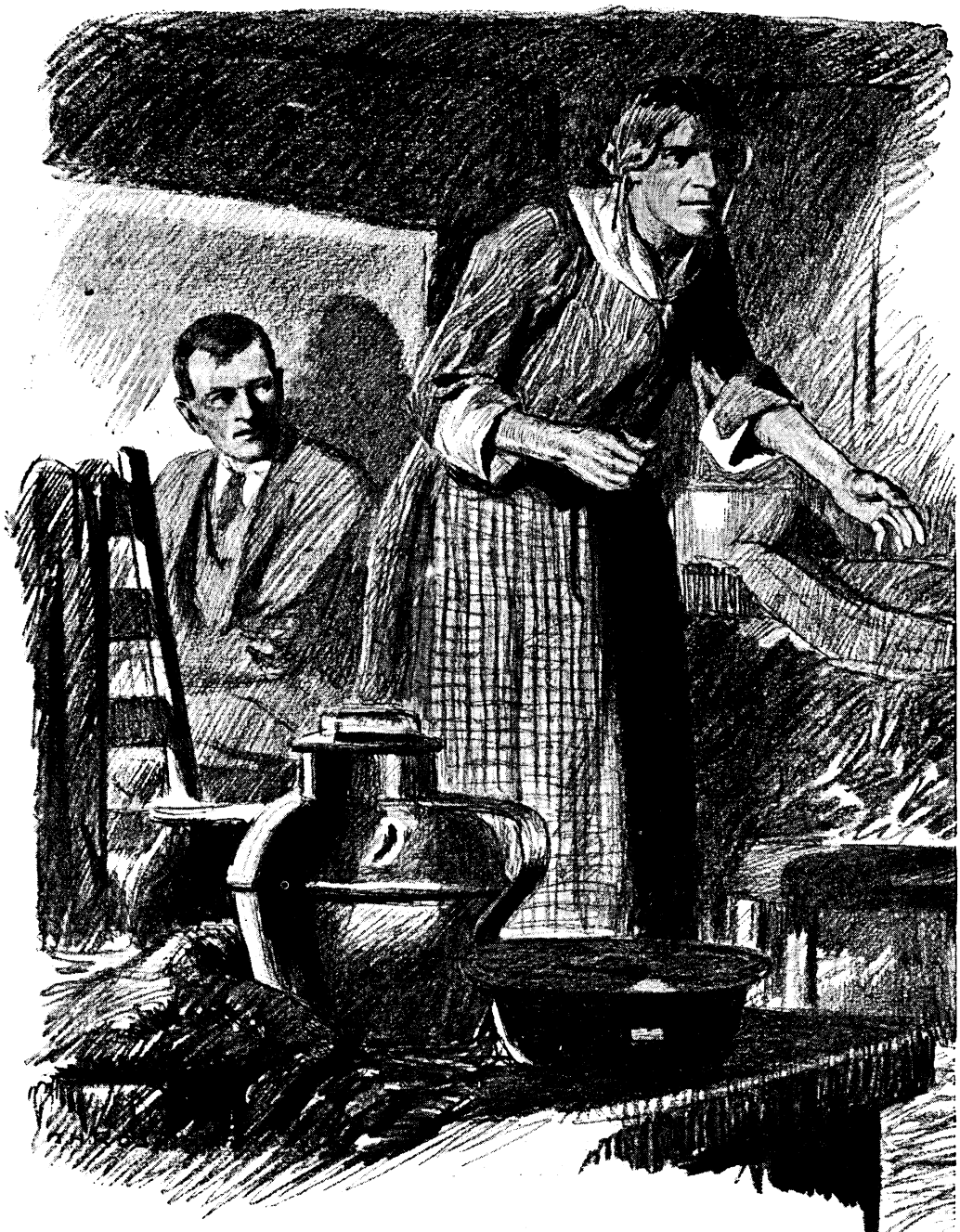
He saw her face change as she opened the door to him, and he said hastily:

"I missed the steamer, and I thought likely you could put me up for the night. I'd rather not go to the hotel."

Following her in, he called himself a fool. Now the woman would pester the life out of him, and serve him right.

But that was not Madelon. Superstition and pride had already brought her to an acceptance of her fate, and she quietly set Wilbur in the chimney-place with his pipe and went about her work. There were the cows to milk—and a rush of relief and despair caught her as she laid her hands on Charmante's distended udder—and the heavy pails to carry down to Adrienne Guitry's for the separator. There was Jeanne to call for at the post-office, which was also the general store; the chickens and the pig to feed, and the supper to prepare.

The wind was now a gale, sharp with the sea, dusty from the unmade roads cut deep with cart-tracks. The few trees on Sark are in the hollows, and this cottage on the cliff crouched nakedly below the wide heavens. Jeanne moved about, anxious-eyed, and with white lips that opened reluctantly for the *potage* when Madelon ladled it into coarse delft bowls with queer bright Brittany figures by the old ladle where the brass had worn down to the iron in places through many, many generations of rubbing. Jeanne would not have taken sympathy from Madelon



now, even if Madelon could have given it. Her manner was resentful, as though, like the wind, she was working up for something worse. The foreigner asked questions and Madelon had to answer. Oh, yes; it was said that there were ghost-things on Herm and Jethou. Spirit-things . . . but who could tell? Not Madelon. Did she find it lonely living here? How could she tell . . . she who had never lived elsewhere? Did she love the sea, having had it in her ears all her life, although perhaps not so thunderous as now? With a dim notion of placating the devils that might now be at their work upon the sea, she answered that she did not know. And then Jeanne laughed—a

high thin eldritch screech such as Madelon had never heard from her before—and got up from the table.

The food, the sea-air and the heat made Wilbur sleepy. He dozed on the low wide padded settle in the chimney-place. The oil-lamp burned dimly, and the kitchen was full of shadows—grey shadows that moved, plum-coloured shadows hanging from the low rafters, red shadows patterned on the stone floor as the peat on the hearth glowed and paled. A warm comfortable vagueness enclosed by a steady thunderous roar that was in some way mighty soothing.

He must have slept for hours, because he was stiff when he roused to the consciousness of low, swift, sibilant voices, and saw the two women standing with the red light about their feet and their black heads in the plum-coloured shadows, and felt, like waves breaking on him, a tensity of drama in the air. Madelon stood like a tree, with her black list slippers planted level and her breast thrown forward as though to meet a storm; but Jeanne swayed like a young sapling, and now and again a long black stocking in her hands swung out like a pendulum that was moving her.

"I do not care," she said, over and over. "I do not care."

"I suppose I must expect this, Jeanne. Because I have always thought of you first, I suppose I must expect this."

"And who asked you to think of me first? Why have you not thought of my father instead of sending him to sea in a crab-basket on a night like this?" She dropped the stocking and clapped her hands over her ears as the blasts increased. "*Mon Dieu!* Stop it, will you!" she screamed at them in frenzy,



"'Keep away. *Allez-vous-en.* I hate you.'"

"Your father! A thousand times has your father been out in worse storms than this, and much you troubled. Your father! Say that it is because your lover is in the old crab-basket and I'll believe."

"Very well, then; and why should I not

think for my man as you should think for yours ? " The young girl trembled, fighting her tempers and her terrors which seemed to break against Madelon like spray against the harsh worn rocks of the Coupée. " I tell you that I myself will buy my father the boat if you will not. There is enough in the stocking if Dylan will help, and I asked him to-day in the post-office. My mother is content to send father to the fishing in a sieve that will drown him, *le pauvre*, I said. But I will not."

" Jeanne ! Jeanne ! " The cry burst from Madelon, but she did not move.

" It is a bad boat, that one, and if it drowns Beauce I'll die. I'll die. There ! Hear that ! The devils have drowned him and come to tell me. I know. I know."

She sank on the floor, tearless, clenched hands against her flat young breast, rocking, rocking. Madelon crept near, but the girl turned a white glare on her. " Keep away. Keep off. He is dead, and you have killed him."

" No, no, *chérisette*. But listen. The wind is nothing great. A thousand times it has been worse. . . ."

" Keep away ! "

" Jeanne . . ."

" Keep away. *Allez-vous-en*. I hate you."

Madelon stood erect, with hands hanging and chin up. She looked like some noble tree stricken to the heart, and Wilbur simply couldn't bear any more of it. What he had to say would be an anti-climax, possibly even useless, but he knew that he could never again look at his own mother with comfort if he didn't have a try.

" Madame ! I have been considering about that cow. . . ."

Madelon started at the voice, looked at him with dull eyes, did not speak.

" I reckon I do want her after all. But to take her at £200 would be robbing you. I'll give you a draft for £300 on my banker to-morrow, and have the cow collected for the cattle-boat leaving Southampton later on."

He saw that she hardly took in what he was saying. Her eyes, her stricken eyes, went back to Jeanne. Wilbur came close.

" It's the privilege of the young folk to fly off the handle and talk a heap of nonsense, ma'am. She'll be as sweet as honey to you when her beau turns up in the morning. But I'm glad she'll be able to live on a farm, for she doesn't seem the shape for a fisherman's wife."

Madelon looked at him, and perhaps for the first night since Jeanne was born great tears rolled over her brown cheeks.

" But how she suffers, *la petite* ! How she suffers ! Monsieur, the good God be good to you, for I think that you have saved her life. You see, as I have already told you, how impossible it is that she should be a fisherman's wife. *Mon Dieu !* It is terrible."

" Never a word of complaint about herself. Can you beat it ? " said Wilbur to his mother afterwards. " And when that fat chap walked in with old Piare next morning, and the girl had got over her hysterics and forgiven her mother, that wonderful woman went about like a queen that had just been crowned. Can you beat it ? "

" Well, mothers have to be like that. Jeanne will probably be just the same when her time comes," said his mother comfortably as they walked across the home-lot on the little Arizona farm to the shady corner where Charmante stood knee-deep in blue-grass. " And the cow will never be worth what you gave for her, you absurd boy ; but I rather like you for doing it, all the same."

And Charmante stood under the beech-tree, swinging her shapely tail and chewing her cud. But her full calm eyes seemed to look past the man and woman, to little devil-guarded Sark with its bleak heights and dark superstitions . . . to where Madelon sat lonely in a shed with her forehead against Fleurie's flank and told her valiantly that the *le bon Dieu* was very good.

MID-WINTER.

THE blue dusk deepens round the valley woods ;
Whilst earth dreams 'neath the blessing of the snow,
That soft white peace that drifts adown the wind
Whispering of sleep, of all forgetfulness.
The silence grows ; quiet magic, rich with rest,
And in that purity of crisp, clear air,
Comes God . . . so holy still.

HELEN M. MORRIS.

CASTLES IN THE AIR



by

MARJORIE BOWEN

ILLUSTRATED BY FRANK INSALL

"DON'T look at those drawings." Bearden spoke so sharply that his wife dropped the folio she had just taken from the tall carved bureau in the corner of the spacious office, and turned, alarmed, at the strange tone in that familiar voice.

"Oh, you startled me," she said in confusion; and, stooping, gathered the drawings and replaced them in the portfolio, adding: "Why shouldn't I look at them? I came on them by chance . . . you're late. You said you'd be back half an hour ago. I've been waiting."

John Bearden had again assumed his usual quiet manner.

"Of course," he answered, "there is no reason why you should not look at the drawings. They are old things. I am rather ashamed of them, I suppose, and it startled me a little to see you at that bureau; I can't remember when it was last unlocked. It's a long time ago, anyhow."

"I don't know why I went to it, except —well, chance. Just because I was rather idle and bored, I suppose, waiting here for you. You know, I thought about something for our house, 'Bellflowers.'"

He heard, but he did not respond to this remark, which she tried to make very animated and enthusiastic. Being a most sensitive woman, she said at once:

"Of course you are tired of 'Bellflowers.' I have made too many suggestions and alterations."

"Bellflowers" was the house he was building for her—for them both. Their marriage was commonly called an ideal marriage, and this was to be an ideal house, a material realisation of those castles in the air so romantically and consistently cherished by many, achieved by so few.

Two years they had been employed—she for nearly all her time, he for nearly all his leisure—in this building of "Bellflowers."

He was an architect, famous as well as successful. She was a woman with both money and taste, who lived in a fastidious, elegant world of her own creation; and herself created a fastidious and elegant world for others by the sheer radiance of her presence, which was at once still and lovely, delicate and strong. She had always created a rich world for her husband. They faced each other rather awkwardly in the luxurious room of his own designing, which was part of the office suite which he had in this old and gracious house.

She so seldom came to his office, and now she had come and waited for him, and been

moved to look in the bureau which he kept there, for the sake of its beauty of line and the dark, richly orange colour of the ancient lacquer; and he, though he stood so quiet, did not know how to deal with this meeting.

She, too, felt ill at ease, holding the old drawings in the worn green marble portfolio, and she looked at him shyly, wondering why he had been displeased to find her there, why he had made that explanation.

"I've been glancing at your old stuff," she confessed, making an agreeable effort to rid the moment of its awkward strain, "and I liked the drawings very much. Please, John, cannot I still look at them?"

He repeated sullenly:

"They're old stuff, don't bother with them. I did them years ago, before we met."

"Designed for gardens," she said, "designed for houses."

"Of course, I never did anything else, did I?"

"But it looks like *the* garden and *the* house," smiled Aurelia Bearden.

Her husband turned away to his desk, and bent over some letters which waited there for him to sign.

"What made you come down here, Aurelia?" he asked, not looking at her. "Couldn't you have waited till this evening about the house?"

"I'm worrying you, I suppose." Her smile was rather faint. She had the presumptuous vanity to believe she could never worry anyone. "Now I have this idea in my head, the house doesn't seem quite right."

"Not even after all the trouble?" he replied as lightly as possible, and yet it seemed a lightness that cost him an effort. "Not quite right yet?"

"Well, perhaps it never will be," she conceded. "I don't know. There is something a little wrong—one does worry, I suppose . . . too much . . . and seeing those drawings . . ." A note of excitement crept into her delicious voice. "I thought I'd found it. These old drawings of yours . . . who knows, John . . .?" She put forward her plea very delicately and diffidently. "Perhaps before you were quite successful and famous, there was something—I don't know—something about your work——"

"That's missing now, I suppose." He finished the sentence for her, and finished it perfectly. "Don't tell me that, Aurelia. There is nothing more irritating for a man than to be told that his work has gone off. Success is nothing at all if you feel that you are not doing as well as you did at first."

"Why, of course I know that," she said hurriedly. "But it wasn't at all what I meant to imply—do look at them, John—I expect you have forgotten all about them, and they really are odd—beautiful drawings."

He brought the portfolio to his desk and laid it open before him, and with fine elegant fingers turned over the drawings and sketches in water-colour and in pencil, and the designs on blue paper traced in white and red; formal architectural designs, which all seemed to be intended for one house.

There were studies in water-colour for a garden quidnunc; a pleached walk, a walk that looked dark, haunted with melancholy and had a white, remote statue in the midst of the shadows; a terrace and the interior of a low chamber which looked out on to the moonlight over the wide park.

"Fantasies," remarked John Bearden, "a boy's fancies—nothing in them—not practical."

"But you made your name," she reminded him, "on fantasies like these. . . ."

"Don't remind me of that prize," he smiled rather dryly. "One never gets away from these things; if I hadn't done it on that I should have done it on something else."

"Of course," she conceded, but not with conviction. She wished that he would not so often belittle that extraordinary piece of luck which had made his career when he had won the great prize offered by a very wealthy, eccentric man, for a castle to be built in the Tyrol, crowning a mountain, overhanging a valley.

The prize had been so handsome and so well advertised that architects from all over the world had competed. And it had been John Bearden—then a very young and very obscure man—who had won the glittering trophy of money and fame.

His design, and the manifold drawings that accompanied it, had been so beautiful, so lively and stately, so practical and yet so original, an artist's dream materialised, that he had touched, at once, those ambitious summits that most men deem themselves happy to achieve in old age.

But more than this—it was through the prize drawings that he had met Aurelia.

All the designs that had competed had

been exhibited in a London gallery, and Aurelia—fine, fastidious, difficult to please—had gone to see them and paused before the

"Why, I dreamt about that place," she had exclaimed at once. "I've been there in dreams." And then she tried to laugh away



"'Don't look at those drawings.' Bearden spoke so sharply that his wife dropped the folio."

winning drawing, not knowing even that it had procured the prize, but fascinated entirely by this house—this palace—rising from garden and woods.

the commonplace remark. "We've all had that feeling, haven't we?" she added lightly to her companion. But it was not lightly that she gazed at the pictured house which

she felt that she knew so well; surely she had once wandered from one room to another, yes, and over the gardens too. "Isn't it extraordinary?" she was forced to murmur. And her companion had told her, rather dryly, that everyone thought it "extraordinary."

For this was the winning drawing, which had brought, not only the prize of several thousands of pounds to the lucky young man who had conceived it, but also a substantial and brilliant future.

"I must meet that young man," mused Aurelia. And she had met him and married him within a few months.

She could never think of him as a stranger—the man who could design that house must have had some entry into her soul long before they had met in the flesh. Hand in hand they had walked through that castle in the air, of that she was convinced. His dream and her dream had been identical—one dream—she was certain. He had been able to put his dream on paper—so to arrange it that it could be reared in stone and brick and marble, among trees and rocks. Her dream had been held in her heart secretly; but they had met because of it—nothing could shake her faith in that . . . the dream they had shared in spirit so long before they knew of the existence of each other.

He told her that the prize drawings were the result of years of meditation on that particular house or palace which had haunted him, and she said that she also had meditated on such a house and walked through it with him—she was sure . . . yes, there had always been someone with her in those dreams, though shadowy, impersonal.

This was the sort of marriage that kind people liked to talk about—in every way happy and delightful—both of them so intelligent, so enthusiastic, so keen to enjoy every aspect of life, so gifted, and in their quiet fashion, so handsome to look at—he thin and dark, she slight and fair—both tall and graceful—both so delighted each in the other . . . and in their odd, mutual fantasy.

That was ten years ago; and if there was a lessening in the lustre of their glittering happiness, it was due to the fact that John Bearden had never accomplished any masterpiece equal to that first one. If he had not begun his career with such a glittering success, he would have been no more than a competent, accomplished architect. Everyone knew this, though no one said it to his face. No one was quite sure whether Aurelia knew it. She always talked of her husband in terms of the most enthusiastic loyalty.

His work was highly paid and highly prized. Perhaps his patrons, confused by the splendour of that first success, never realised how far his subsequent creation had fallen short of that first superb achievement.

Now it was all endeavour—yes, for years it had been endeavour on the part of John Bearden; but that first design had been achievement. . . .

He was hard-working, energetic, accomplished, and he had contrived to hold the place which at one prodigious leap he had attained, but he had done no more than hold it; and when Aurelia had said, "Build me a house, build our castle in the air—you've done it once, do it again—for me," they had between them designed "Bellflowers" and it had not "come out right"—it was not the house of Aurelia's dreams.

She could not talk about this. After ten years it would be childish to talk of dreams. By then, dreams should have been interwoven with reality into one shining texture of life. She never referred to the prize drawings through which they had met. Never till to-day, when she stood with the portfolio of sketches before her on the desk and was so delighted and so entranced to see them that she must speak to him about them, must hope that he would share this delight and entrancement.

"This is the house," she said confidently; her fine face was flushed beneath her plumed and shady hat. "Can't you see it, John? This is our house where we've been together."

"Where we've been together?" he repeated sharply, and his tone made her feel childish.

"You know what I mean," she continued nervously, "the same house—the house you drew for the prize ten years ago. Here are the drafts, they are what I recognised when I saw them in the exhibition—you know what I mean, John,—don't make me feel foolish."

"Yes, of course I know what you mean," he replied hurriedly; "you see, this is old stuff, just things I did and tossed away—there is nothing in them really."

"But there's everything in them to me," said Aurelia. She added impulsively and injudiciously: "I like them better than anything you've done since."

John Bearden began to walk up and down the wide spacious room.

"That's nonsense," he said, drawing his

fine dark brows together in a sharp frown. "It really is, Aurelia; it's childish. After ten years of hard work, of successful work—well, I think I can say, of brilliant work—you get hold of some old sketches that I've hidden away in a bureau and forgotten, and tell me they're better than anything I've done since."

To her surprise, and almost to her horror, he began in a high rather shrill voice to run over all the buildings he had erected since they had been married, almost as if he were justifying himself—theatres, town-halls, private houses, official buildings, bridges—all successful, all praised, all admired—and then, she had to take out these few rough drawings and extol them above them all . . . it was stupid, it was exasperating, she ought not to be so annoying. . . .

"Why, you never *will* be satisfied, Aurelia. You'd better give up 'Bellflowers,' you don't like it—I can't please you, so let's stop it, let's buy something—something old that you can turn about to your taste—I can't do what you want, it seems."

Aurelia was silent, her lip quivered, she felt stung to the soul. Of course, she had been childish and stupid—it was above everything foolish to insist on dreams—she ought to have seen that he was tired of the house. The name was futile—"Bellflowers"—she did not know why she had chosen it; it wasn't really the right name, anyhow—the only one she could think of . . . even after all the teasing effort to get the right name. . . .

And what was the matter with the house? The numerous friends whom she had taken to see it all declared it "perfect." There was something wrong in her, not in the building, and she looked clearly at her husband through eyes that were full of tears, and a sharp unbidden thought came stealing into her mind—"My fault, not his, that our marriage isn't quite a success any more than 'Bellflowers'—any more than his career—there's something wrong . . . with me."

This was an extraordinary thought to come into Aurelia's mind, for until that moment she had believed herself a completely happy woman. Never to anyone would she have admitted that anything was wrong, either with her marriage or with her husband's work or with the house he was building for her—and now, in a second, this conviction had come to her, that there was something wrong with all three, nothing quite had come up to her expectation—he had never performed the work which she had expected after that first extraordinary success, and he had never been quite the husband that she thought he must be on the strength of that extraordinary dream meeting in a house which they had both known, both conceived, which she had kept in her mind, and he had put on paper . . . no, never quite that perfect lover, that perfect companion.

He was tying up the portfolio now, drawing sharply together the dusty ties, and she felt that the action was somehow brutal, as if he were shutting away the past, a past that was dear to her . . . but which to him had never been dear.

"Why are you doing that, John?" she asked instinctively. "I really like them, you know—I'm going to have them for my own—to put them in my room—they give me great pleasure."

"No," said John Bearden harshly, "I can't endure that. It's bad enough that you've got that wretched prize drawing there, the most conspicuous thing in the house—and every little sketch I did for it framed."

"Well, why not?" Despite her wish, her voice was sharp and challenging. "Why not, John, if it gives me pleasure—the greatest pleasure I have?"

"After ten years?" he muttered. "Your greatest pleasure?"

"What are years?" asked Aurelia, still on that note of challenge. "We haven't changed."

"No," he admitted dryly, "we haven't changed—you're still living in a dream, and I'm still trying to make that dream come true . . . or have given it up, perhaps, as I gave it up from the first."

"The dreams are true in themselves," she protested, "and *you* were dreaming then, when we first met." She took the portfolio from him and opened it again. "How can you be so rough with yourself, even if you've changed, John?" Her beautiful voice was full of tenderness. "Think of yourself then—that poor young man—with so little money and so little hope, sending in the drawings for that great competition, and getting the prize, getting fame and money, and if that's any value, John, getting me, all at once. Haven't you any sympathy with him and that effort?"

"You talk as if it were another person," muttered Bearden. "I don't know what we're talking about. I don't want you to have the sketches—that ought to be enough, Aurelia; it's all castles in the air."

"No, no," she protested, "not castles in the air—didn't we meet?—aren't we married?" Her words seemed in some way to unnerve her husband; he made an attempt, awkward for him, for usually he was most even in his demeanour, to change the subject.

"What did you want to ask about 'Bellflowers'?" he asked with an attempt at a smile. "Why did you come up here? Is it so important?" He tried to speak tenderly, but she shrank away as if he had used harsh words.

"Never mind about 'Bellflowers.' It's a silly name, isn't it? That's one thing—I wanted to change that—I don't know why flowers with bells and bells with flowers have always foolishly fascinated me, of course, but somehow—no, it's silly, a pretence, it isn't real."

"And yet you were talking about dreams," he smiled, "and now you complain about something that isn't real. What is it you *do* want, Aurelia?"

"But dreams are real, the dreams are the one reality," she insisted. "You must see that; but this house isn't a dream, it's an imitation of a dream—I don't know, it's all wrong—those sketches are all right, and you won't let me see them."

"A man doesn't want to go backwards," he protested. "I was only a boy then, almost a child—those were just rough stupid attempts—they're not practical, any of them, wild designs like illustrations to a fairy tale—extravagant, unpractical. I wish you would take more interest in what I am doing now, Aurelia—you never really have, you know."

Talk about pretence—there was pretence there, and now this grievance was out and growing between them like a tangible creature.

She made her protest quickly and ineffectively. "But, of course, I'm interested—of course I care—what a stupid mood we both seem in, just because I admired those old drawings."

He looked obliquely at the shabby worn portfolio, and said, as if to himself, "I ought to have destroyed them years ago, but somehow I never could."

"Why?" asked Aurelia.

He took up the portfolio to the Spanish bureau, and his fingers seemed to shake and be clumsy as he did so, for a small card fell out of the portfolio on to the floor and Aurelia picked it up. It was a worn, cheap and faded photograph of a young man.

"Who is this?" she asked.

John Bearden was carefully returning the portfolio to the bureau in the corner. He looked over his shoulder and said:

"Oh, that—that's poor Carstairs, that young Scotsman I used to share rooms with—you never met him?"

"No," said Aurelia, "I never met him, and I never saw his photograph before. Isn't he like Johnny?"

"Like Johnny?" cried Bearden. "What do you mean, Aurelia?"

Johnny was their little boy, their only child. Her remark seemed most fantastic.

"I don't know," she said. "As soon as I looked at it, I thought—how like Johnny, like Johnny will be at his age—about how old?—nineteen, twenty?"

"About that," agreed Bearden sullenly.

"You didn't like him?" she asked, quick to catch his inflection of disinterest.

"Like him? Oh, I don't know, we were great friends—he was a queer sort of fellow, a rather raw Scotsman—he seemed to have no kith or kin, but just his keenness for art and architecture, and he wasn't bad either. You remember he was killed."

"Yes," she answered softly, "I remember you told me that and I didn't care to hear about it. It was really dreadful, wasn't it?"

"Just a street accident, that's all," said John Bearden grimly. "I haven't spoken of it for years. How badly it comes back. I was telephoned for . . . to go to the hospital. There he was lying all smashed up—just knocked down in the street, hurrying along, with his head full of schemes and plans and hopes—and then——"

"Don't," interrupted Aurelia, "don't!"

"I sat up with him all night," said Bearden, turning towards the bureau. "Yes, all night, hoping that he would be able to speak—they had to give him drugs, you know."

"I'm glad you did that," said Aurelia, still looking at the faded photograph.

"I couldn't have done anything else. I was the only friend he had in London."

"He was competing for the prize, too, for the drawing of the castle of the Tyrol, wasn't he?" said Aurelia. "I seem to remember that."

"Yes, he was competing. He told me to send his drawing in. Just before he died he came out of his trance or stupor—God help us! I don't know whether he knew what he was saying or not, but he seemed to recognise me, and he said: 'The drawing's yours—do what you like with it.'"

"You sent it in, of course?" remarked Aurelia, quickly.

"Of course," answered John Bearden. Poor fellow, I suppose it wasn't very good—I never noticed it. I don't think anyone else did. It was a very ordinary sort of drawing, I suppose; but he had taken very great pains with it. He lived for it, for months, quite sure that he would get the prize."

"The irony of it," sighed Aurelia. "Poor fellow; but he *is* like Johnny—do come and look."

She drew the photograph out, and her husband had to turn and look at it.

"The same eyes as Johnny, and the same mouth. He was good-looking, wasn't he?"

She put the photograph down on the desk.

"Well, I'll go now—somehow things have gone wrong this afternoon. I haven't said what I meant to say—I am afraid I've bothered you. I wish you'd let me have the drawings. I think, you know——" She paused, and John Bearden asked:

"What do you think, Aurelia?"

"I think that if I'd looked at them long enough I should have got the name of the house, which isn't 'Bellflowers.'"

"Oh, don't," cried Bearden suddenly, "don't, Aurelia! You don't know what you're saying . . . I don't know what's happening to us; you had better go home."

"I have disturbed you?" she asked quickly. "You feel bothered—worried?"

"I am all right, Aurelia, but you know it wounds me—what you said about my work. . . ."

"But I didn't say anything about your work; I don't know what you mean. Well, I'll go home. I wish that photograph weren't so like Johnny—it's uncanny, and you've had it hidden away there so long. Oh, John, what was his name?"

"Hilary Carstairs," replied Bearden.

"I have thought of the name of the place. It isn't 'Bellflowers,' of course; it's 'Little Pomeroy'—I think that was the name of an apple—there were three apple trees of that kind somewhere in the garden."

"'Little Pomeroy,' that's a stupid name," stammered John Bearden. "You don't think of very good names, Aurelia. I can't imagine a house called 'Little Pomeroy.'"

"No, no," she said. "I suppose I'm foolish; but that seemed to me to be the name. It is stupid, but it's the right name. Well, I'll see you this evening. Good-bye."

She did not move, though she spoke these words of leave-taking, but stood gazing at him. He could do no other than gaze at her. And so they stared at each other, each conscious of something between them, but only he knew what it was.

She was still the tall, graceful woman—not beautiful, but perfect, like a light transfiguring all on which her radiance fell, with whom he had fallen in love in such an ecstasy . . . ten years ago. Finer, and more melancholy, perhaps, but little changed.

"I'll bring the sketches that you've found," he said with an effort, "when I've just been through them."

And then she left him, but looking back over her shoulder, not, he thought, at him, but at that something which had stood between them and which he knew for what it was, but that she did not and must never know.

When she had gone, John Bearden set up before him on his handsome desk that cheap and faded photograph, and then he went to the bureau and brought out the portfolio which, but a few moments before, he had carefully locked away. Had she seen what was written on them, or had she spoken because of some terrible intuition? He turned over the drawings. No, she could scarcely have seen, for it was written only on the back, and that in a small, neat hand—"Designs for a house to be called 'Pomeroy,' by Hilary Carstairs."

"I ought to have destroyed them with all the others," mused John Bearden to himself. "I wonder why I didn't," and he turned them over one by one—water-colours, pencil drawings, architectural designs for an extravagant and fantastic house or palace to be called "Pomeroy." His mind went back ten years to those dingy rooms which he and this boy, so much younger than himself, had shared. He could see the bare table and the youth stooping over it—the paper, the water-colour, the pencil, the hard white electric light sweeping down on it all, and the firm young face frowning with absorption in his work, the vigorous young figure, the supple young hand—all came back to him, not for the first time. Hilary Carstairs had cared for nothing but his work. He had a passion for architecture, and above all, a passion for this particular house, this palace in the mountains among the woods, set in luxurious gardens. It had haunted him, he had often said, all his short life.

"I've not invented it," he used to say. "I've been there; it's something I've seen in dreams, of course."

And when the great competition had been announced for a wealthy man's luxurious palace, Hilary Carstairs had laughed aloud.

"Why, I could do that, of course," he had cried; "it's my palace—my 'castle in the air' come true."

And John Bearden had watched him day by day evolving his drawings, his plans, his description; while he also, entering with ardour and with tempestuous ambition into the same competition, clutching desperately at this same great chance, had been able to do no more than an able, accomplished design.

The day that Hilary Carstairs had died in the hospital John Bearden had gone back to their rooms and looked at the two sets of designs lying on the work-table side by side.

"It's yours to do what you like with," the dying boy had said, and Bearden had rubbed out the signature and put his own in place of it . . . coldly, carefully.

He effaced Hilary Carstairs for ever and set John Bearden in his place. He knew that these drawings showed genius and must reap the inevitable reward of genius, and that his own showed no more than painstaking



"'Where is that poor young man buried, John? Hilary Carstairs, I mean. He seems to have been so lonely, I should like to send some flowers to his grave.'"

talent, which so often goes unrewarded, and he sent in Hilary Carstairs' drawings under his own name, and his own inferior drawings under that of Hilary Carstairs.

No one guessed—why should anyone? And he had done no wrong. Of that he again and again solemnly assured himself—he had done no wrong. What would youthful fame and money and Aurelia have been to that poor dead boy? He wanted all three—he was alive and avid for all that life could give; while that poor broken clay—what did that want with any of it? And if there was a spirit separate from the clay, what did that want, either? "Render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's," he had quoted to himself. "I am of the world, and want what the world offers."



And he had taken Hilary Carstairs' fame and money, and Aurelia, who had come to him through that drawing of the castle where he said he had walked in dreams. "I wonder if they ever met," he mused, looking at the faded photograph in front of him.

"And he is like Johnny—dreadfully like Johnny."

John Bearden put his worn face in his lean hands. Just now it had been as if Hilary Carstairs had stood between them—a poor definite shade dividing them. He had robbed him, this dead boy, of everything; but no one had ever known. They had both been so poor and obscure that there was very little evidence of the genius of Hilary Carstairs, and what little there had been had been most carefully and thoughtfully destroyed. All but these sketches, and from their destruction, through some superstitious horror, he had refrained, but now they should go. And the photograph with them—that photograph with the horrible grotesque likeness to his son.

How would he feel when Johnny was nineteen, looking at him with the eager eyes of Hilary Carstairs? Yes, the photograph must go. He wished he had destroyed it long since, for he had begun to forget the likeness which he had seen growing day by day in the child's face. Now he had been reminded of it, so harshly and so fiercely.

He found himself talking out loud addressing the photograph and striking his hand on the desk.

"My work," he cried, "I've built it all up by my own efforts; all has been my own work, and good work, work that has been highly praised, well paid for; it's been my own life, and my own wife. I've made Aurelia happy—not you; you never even saw her."

Then he paused, frightened at having been provoked into this passionate speech, and put his nervous fingers to his shuddering lips.

"I could have succeeded without that chance," he muttered to himself, "and she'll never know—never, never. And yet hadn't she always known that there was just something wrong? Their life in this work, in the child. I'm losing myself in fancies. I ought to have lived this down years ago."

He effaced the name from all the drawings, he had torn the photograph into small pieces. He put all back into the portfolio and locked it in the bureau. There was no fire in the room, he must find another means of destruction.

He couldn't go on building for her the house that she wished to call "Little Pomeroy." He couldn't take those designs home to her. There was a limit. He must find some excuse—he would forget; she would be content with a substitute—she was well used to that, was Aurelia; for all her life she had had to be content with a substitute—all their life together.

He went home and found her in an amiable and tender mood. She was sorry for something—she did not know what—something that had happened at his office that afternoon. She accepted his excuses, cold and dry excuses, about the drawings. His mood did not seem in any way to annoy or disturb her. She said that they would call the house "Bellflowers," and he must finish it as he wished. . . .

"That's the end," thought John Bearden. "I'm free, I shall never hear any more of it. I've robbed him of everything now, there's nothing left to take."

In this he was mistaken.

After dinner, Aurelia, who had been musing over an old book, said:

"Where is that poor young man buried, John? Hilary Carstairs, I mean. He seems to have been so lonely, I should like to send some flowers to his grave."

Bitter jealousy shook John Bearden's soul. After all these years, to be haunted like this. There was still something of which he could rob Hilary Carstairs. He knew where that neglected grave was. He had stood beside it when the coffin was lowered into the yellow clay. He had put a stone over it, out of the stolen prize-money, and never anything else.

And now Aurelia wanted to go there and put flowers on it. She knew, of course, she knew! But he would take good care that she should never know that he knew. . . .

"His people came and took him away," he answered quietly. "I don't know where—somewhere in Scotland, I suppose."

"I'm sorry," mused Aurelia quietly, turning over the pages of her book.

"Sorry for whom?"

John Bearden could not forbear this dangerous remark.

"I don't know," smiled Aurelia, "but I should have liked to take the flowers, that's all."

"Sorry for whom?" he repeated with deeper nervousness.

"Oh," she replied vaguely, "for all of us, I suppose."



" Without haste, without testing his footing, he strolled on and leapt—one magnificent bound."

WHEN THE HUNGER GODS MET

By H. MORTIMER BATTEN

ILLUSTRATED BY ERNEST ARIS

ACROSS the great grey loneliness the whitetail deer dragged her weary way. Evidently she had travelled far and fast, for she floundered heavily, her big ears no longer erect, her flanks ice-coated with the panting breath from her nostrils. Moreover, she no longer paused at intervals to watch her backtrail and to listen; she just dragged on, bursting now and then into panic-stricken little spurts as a fresh outbreak of evil sounds broke from the white expanse behind her. Harsh and deep and wavering were those sounds, yet not devoid of savage melody, for of all sounds on earth they were the very utterance of the northern forests, now in the grip of winter.

It was the old story of a deer singled out and run to destruction, a deer whose every trick had failed, till now, blind with exhaustion, she had sought the wide expanse of the open lake, where the final tragic scene would come.

The timber wolves were less than a mile away—four of them running in close formation. They were not running hard—in fact, a good human sprinter could have kept pace with them, for they counted on the length of the chase rather than on speed. Steadily, inexorably, on and on, never diverting, running true to the scent line—following, following, without break or pause, through the drifts, across the glare ice; and they too were ice-coated, moving like ghosts in a grim and ghostly world. To see them running thus was to behold the sinister and the terrible, living machines of death, so certain in their working that their eerie "tally-ho" made their presence no more sinister. One's heart went out to that hapless little fugitive dragging gamely on through the lifeless whiteness, where no living aid could come to her.

Utterly alone! Was any creature on all God's earth more utterly alone? The grey of evening closing fast, around her the level ice, and ahead and beyond the forest, snow-laden, silent, motionless as a picture—ever beyond. Looking upon that scene one might have thought that no living thing had stirred across it since time began, but here at last was a burlesque of the living—the whitetail doe, and at her heels those hounds of death!

Had the wolves looked up, they would have seen her and ceased to throw their tongues, but their gnarled muzzles were to the ground, and so they did not see what was surely a very grand and wonderful thing. For there *was* life in those woods, life radiant and complete, and now it came—another whitetail deer, a buck, running from the timber edge to meet the stricken doe. His big eyes were wide, his big ears up, and he came stepping high, glaring past her and beyond, whence came those sounds of music. How wonderfully alive he looked, a glorious little running machine, ready for the chase, bright and eager for it, supreme in the confidence of his own powers.

The doe might not have seen him. Her glazed eyes never rose from the snow as he pranced up to her, sniffed her nostrils, then circled round towards the wolves, treading in her tracks. Fearlessly, defiantly, he went to meet them, searching the white expanse ahead, while meantime the doe seemed to know her part, for at walking pace she turned towards the timber, where she could lie and hide.

Not a hundred yards apart, the big buck stopped and looked at the approaching wolves. Just one second he stopped, but it was long enough for them to see him, and away he went—one prodigious leap at right angles from the trail, away to the north, bound after bound in a dust of ice crystals, and, seeing their quarry, the wolves swerved at last from the scent line to follow by sight.

Another two minutes and he was clean away, but the wolves merely dropped their muzzles to the snow again, and the chase went on. He reached the cedar headland, and there—O, fateful error of his kind!—he stopped to watch and listen, even went back a few paces to look for them, and—yes, they were there, coming on, no faster, no slower, running packed like a little cloud of vapour passing over the snow. The buck wheeled and sought the timber, wherein lay his network of runways, from cedar swamp to blueberry ridge, then up and over the height of land where the twisted birch and poplar grew.

Thus silence closed on the wake of the stricken doe save for the far-off murmur of the pack, fading steadily towards the north. She walked a few paces, rested and walked, on towards the lake margin, her nose, rather than her eyes, "watching" her backtrail. For she was moving with the currents of air, as an exhausted deer always does. One would have said that the atmosphere was stationary, no wind at all, but the wet, sensitive nose of the whitetail told her that the air currents were constant from the west, and all at once she floundered again, as though fresh panic had assailed her. A second pack of wolves following the first? If so they were following in silence, yet she floundered hurriedly on, reached the timber-line, dragging herself up the icy bank, and there she lay down under a windfall. A man might have walked up to her and clubbed her.

Far off she could hear the wolves hunting her mate, like echoes rising from a vault—veering eastwards now, and as the last fiery light of sunset flared across the southern sky, they passed behind her not a mile away. Her head sank, her neck outstretched along the ground, as she had crouched when a tiny speckled fawn at her mother's bidding, for something was coming towards her across the lake, following the trail of the wolf pack, which was her trail. Not wolves—no, but the most terrible hunter of them all, swinging high-shouldered, head down—rolling, lumbering along, his small eyes red with hunger and the lust to kill. She could not see him, but her nostrils told her all.

He was an old grizzly—old and restless

and out at elbows with his lot, or he would have been sleeping deep under the drifts in an ice-lined, silent chamber. Far better for him too, and for those about him, for there was precious little game in the north land these days. For many days he had eaten nothing, for weeks he had eaten no more than sufficient to keep a mink alive, so that his hunger was the worst hunger of all—the accumulated hunger of long insufficiency. Yet starvation had merely increased his wiry restlessness, and as a fighting machine he was stripped to the bone for action.

So, running the trail of the wolves, he reached the point at which they had swerved to the north, but, not to be deceived, he followed the deer scent past that point, for it was deer he was after, not wolf. He came to the place at which the buck had stood, and here he was deceived, for he followed the strong, fresh line towards the north, and the cowering exhausted doe under the windfall knew that this second peril was past.

For several hours the grizzly had followed the chase, knowing that soon the wolves would kill, when he would bear like a whirlwind down upon the feast and scatter them before him. The long chase had not improved his temper, and once again he settled to listen, and having determined the direction the deer was taking, he set off to intercept it. The moon was up now, and everywhere about the forest aisles a million million jewels sparkled in the silver light; but again the buck veered, cutting a wide circle round the place where the doe lay resting. One hour, two hours passed, and still the savage "tally-ho," now near, now far, now east, now west, while at intervals the grizzly paused to listen. Once on the skyline, amidst the shattered, ice-hung timber, he reared, big and grotesque and sharp against the sky, and as he listened, deer and death-hounds came surging back towards the north end of the lake. Now was the grizzly's chance, now or never, for the deer, hard-pressed, was heading clean out of the range, heading for the canyon, for that narrow neck deep cut across the ridge between this lake and the next. If it stuck to the ridge there was but one place of crossing, and the grizzly knew that place. He too swung north, lumbering, crashing headlong through the woods, up the steep bluff towards the jagged skyline along which the chase was coming. Nearer, nearer drew the baying of the pack, but—there was but one crossing, and the grizzly knew it. He got there with minutes to spare—a single pine with root upturned and crooked arms upflung, bridging the gulch from brink to brink, with three hundred feet of spangled night below.

Dark, deep, and narrow, as though some giant of the past had viciously scored the ridge in two with a jagged tool—narrow and abrupt, with fire-scourged timber and broken scree on either side, the canyon yawned, truly a death-trap for the unwary, for a whole regiment of soldiers might have marched over the brink, so invisible was that cutting. Slashing the ridge in two, with no way across save that fallen tree, the bark of which was trodden glazed by moving paws, it was to this point that the lynxes, hunting in packs, drove the rabbit shoals. It was here that the black bears and the martens crossed, and it was surely to this place that the hard-pressed deer was coming.

The grizzly paused again to listen, then he swung across, the dead tree teetering to his weight, sending a shower of brittle crystals down into the night. He cowered a little as he watched them fall, but soon he reached the other side, and there, in the shadow cast by the trunk, he crouched, flattened out, compressed into a minimum of space. One would have thought that there was hardly shadow enough to hide a cat, yet that monstrous hulk of bone and fur effaced itself with the magic of a conjuring trick.

Yet, for all his cunning and his knowledge of the chase, the grizzly did not reason out that the deer would never cross by a fallen tree, and now from the shadows near there burst another chorus—"yap-yarr-woo-oo-o-o!" tailing off into the heavens, and unexpectedly, silently, a dainty, upright figure moved into relief against the snow. It was the whitetail buck, but one would hardly have known him. He seemed veritably to have shrunk, he was caked with ice from neck to tail. Hard-pressed he was and ill at ease, for every trick he knew, the sidelong leap, the double back, had found his pursuers still at his heels. So the time had come for one last bid for life ere he took the open ice, for, following, not fast but inexorably sure, the wolves were gaining on him.

Just so far does the reasoning of the wild folk go, and beyond that their judgment fails. The grizzly thought that because he crossed by the fallen tree the deer would cross; so now the whitetail thought that if he leapt, the wolves must leap behind him, or yield to the barrier which for him meant

life. As in summer time in similar plight he might have turned to the rapids, to drown or to live, knowing that his pursuers dare not follow, so now he had turned at length to the canyon brink, to cross or to end his life by a way of his own choosing.

Out into the moonlight he came by his own chosen path, for had he not led the chase as now he would end it?—stepping daintily, gazing indifferently ahead, then twenty feet from the brink it seemed that his strength came surging back. Without haste, without testing his footing, he strolled on and leapt —one magnificent bound, high and straight and clear against the sky. The grizzly watched, and stirred uneasily, uttering a sullen snarl. He watched as though in wonder, and again he stirred, for the buck had landed—clinging with his forehoofs to the very brink. A moment he hung there, struggling violently; a moment the scales hung in the balance, then, straining every muscle upon the icy edge, while the sharp teeth of winter crackled beneath him, he fought his way upwards—up on to sound ground, safely across. It would have wrung a hearty cheer from a million spectators had they been there to watch, but there was only one spectator, and he was savagely sullen that his quarry had passed him by.

The grizzly would have charged from his hiding in a last forlorn hope of striking down the deer, but there came from the timber edge that chorus of the pack hunters. In the crisp, tense silence it crackled like whip-cracks, then down they came across the open patch where the deer had stood, and looking up, they saw him standing on the other side, staring back at them. They surged to the brink, and there they stopped, looking with lowered ears into the gloom below. The buck shook his head at them, but even as he did so, fear came back into his eyes and he trotted on, for the leader wolf had turned towards the bridge, his followers packing at his heels.

The whitetail did not see what happened —nor any living thing save those which played a part. The leader led the way across the prostrate tree, behind him the pack, but as it teetered to their weight, with giddy space below, there loomed from the shadow a black and towering hulk, gorilla arms out-flung, saliva-dripping jaws agape. Even the slow-motion film would hardly have recorded it—one moment that mountain of flesh rearing from nowhere, then—thud, slash, thud, as, quicker than a weasel's strike, the grizzly struck. Thud, slash, thud, the clash of yellow fangs, the old-world, savage sound of claws on flesh, dark figures flashing skywards, then downwards into space, the snarl, the clutch of claws on ice, the dust of flying snow, then—that was all! The grizzly clung, one arm about the tree, head and shoulders beneath it, peering downwards into space, where, amidst moonlight and shadow, spinning, struggling as they fell, four living things became smaller and smaller as they went.

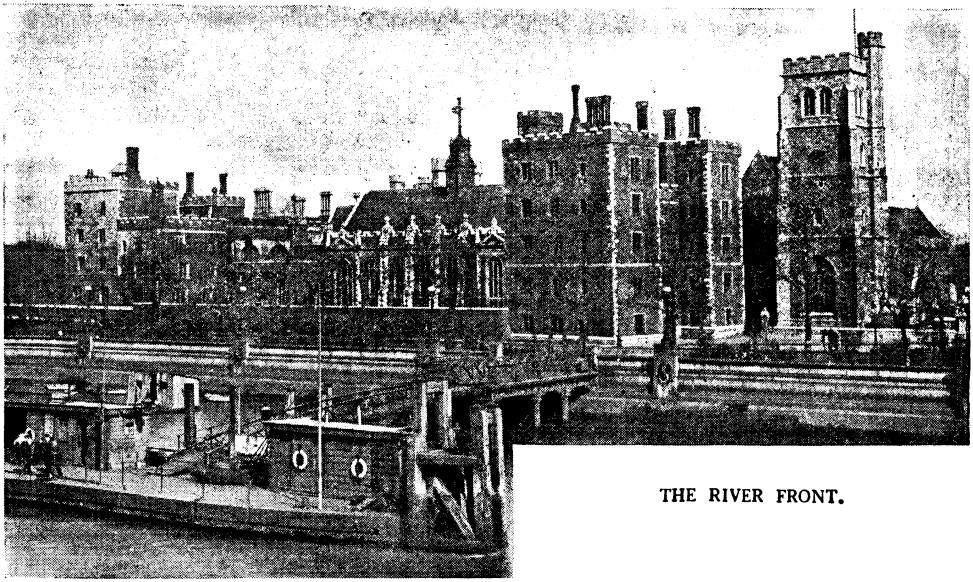
Then, humped, grotesque, slow of motion as a sloth, the grizzly drew himself back from his precarious hold, and growling his evil temper, licked the blood from his claws, while he stared, red-eyed, into the darkness below, then back by the way the deer was gone. No venison for him that night, but wolf if he chose to descend to the canyon depths. Those who are hungry can rarely choose their fare, but when later on he fed ravenously, yet without relish, the day was dawning, bright with all the promise of the northward-journeying sun. And at that very moment a whitetail buck stood over his mate, tapping her with a dainty forefoot, bidding her rise and follow him on the trail to their springtime haunts.

LOSSES ON THE LINKS.

I LOST much more than just the game
In playing round alone with you.
When to the final green we came
I lost much more than just the game.
My foolish heart was all aflame.
And you, you little minx, you knew
I lost much more than just the game
In playing round alone with you.

I could not tell you what I meant
To say if I'd had time to speak.
Your father met us—off you went—
I could not tell you what I meant.
And now my changeful ardour's bent
On quite another girl this week!
I could not tell you what I meant
To say if I'd had time to speak.

JOHN R. WILSON.



THE RIVER FRONT.

LAMBETH PALACE AND ITS STORY

By GUY HESELTINE

(Photographs by Russell & Sons, London.)

THOUGH Lambeth Palace, the official home of the Archbishop of Canterbury, is virtually in the heart of London, its interior is a veritable *terra incognita* to the majority of those who pass it daily, and little or nothing is known by the outside world either of its history or of the wonderful treasures in its library.

Many ask how it is that fifty-three Archbishops have had their home here in London rather than within their Archiepiscopal See ?

The answer is supplied by a glance from the windows of the Palace across the Thames to the Houses of Parliament. Westminster has always been the heart of the kingdom of England, and the Archbishops of Canterbury have been, since pre-Conquest days, among the most important figures about the Court. No fewer than fifteen of them, indeed, held office as Lord Chancellor long before this appointment had come to be regarded as a purely legal one. These were Wulelm (928), Thomas à Becket (1162), Hubert Walter (1193), Walter Reynolds (1313), John Stratford (1333), John Ufford (1348), Simon Langham (1366), Simon Sudbury (1375), William Courtenay (1381), Thomas Arundel (1397), John Stafford (1443), John Kempe (1452), Thomas Bouchier (1454), John Morton (1486), and, last of all, William Warham (1503).

The scarcely less important office of Lord Treasurer was also filled occasionally by the Primate, and three of the foregoing list of Lord Chancellors—Reynolds, Stafford, and Bouchier—held the dual appointments. In addition, strange as it sounds to modern ears, there were two Archbishops of Canterbury who also held the office of Chief Justice of England, Radulphus (1114–1122) and Hubert Walter (1193–1205).

The first Archbishop to decide upon a home in London and not at Canterbury was Baldwin, who became Primate in 1184, but before he could carry his intention into effect he died while accompanying Richard I upon his Crusade. His successor, Hubert Walter, adopted Baldwin's scheme, but no trace of the buildings erected by him or his successor, Stephen Langton, is to be found in the conglomerate range of buildings that make up Lambeth Palace at the present day. The oldest portion is undoubtedly the crypt beneath the tiny chapel, which may be assigned to the early part of the thirteenth century, and it is probable that Archbishop

Boniface of Savoy, who was Primate from 1241 to 1270, built this, together with the original chapel, being assigned by Pope Urban IV one-fourth of the offerings at the shrine of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury Cathedral for this purpose.

Many periods and styles of architecture are represented at Lambeth Palace, and the names of some of its greatest inhabitants are commemorated, successive Archbishops having taken delight either in adding to their official home or in embellishing its interior.



THE GUARD ROOM.
With reset fourteenth-century roof.

Thus the massive gateway that forms the most striking external feature, with its two great flanking towers of brick, commemorates Cardinal Morton. The great hall, which now contains the library, was originally built in the Middle Ages, but it was so severely damaged during the Commonwealth that it owes its present form mainly to the plans of Inigo Jones, while the tall Water Tower, usually known as "The Lollards' Tower," as will presently be explained, is closely identified with Archbishop Chicheley.

As Lambeth Palace exists to-day, more than one-half is taken up by the residential portion. This was designed in Gothic style by Edward Blore under the direction of Archbishop Howley, who became Primate exactly a hundred years ago, after being Bishop of London. The cost, about sixty thousand pounds, was largely borne by him.

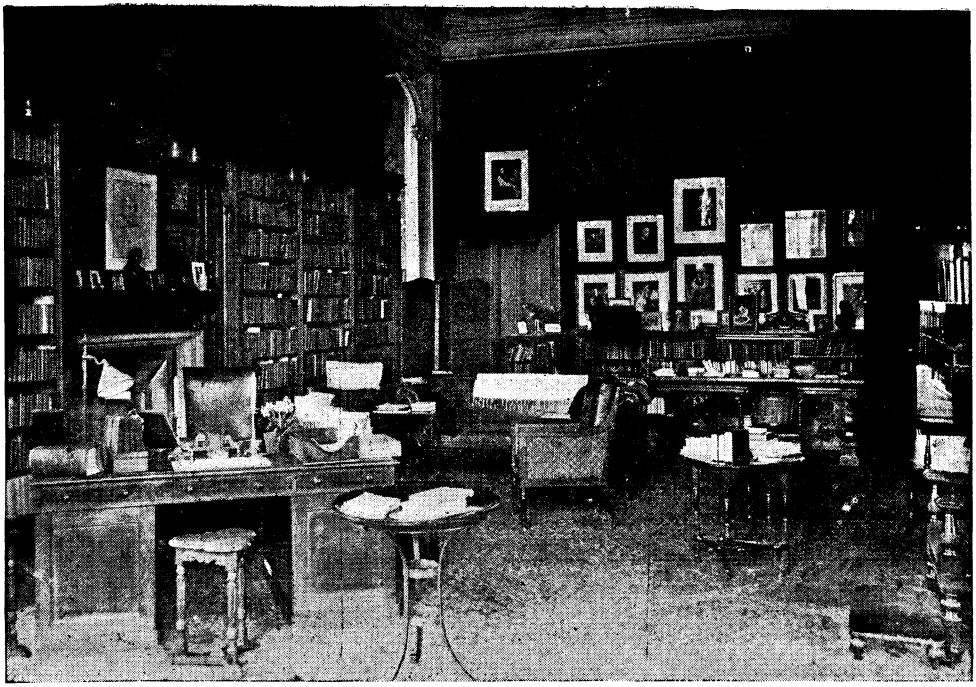
Morton's gateway, by which entrance to the Palace is usually gained, is regarded as one of the finest specimens of early Tudor brick building in the country, the gateway of St. John's College, Cambridge, being its only possible rival. The name of the builder is given in the form of a rebus, which is several times repeated, the letter "M" on a barrel or "tun."

In its early days this gateway served as a prison for those who, like Hugh Latimer, Bishop of Worcester, were committed "to the safe custody" of the Primate. A relic of those days is still to be seen in a small opening in the inner wall of the eastern tower which is protected by a strong iron grating through which the warders, one of whom was constantly on duty, might observe all who passed up and down the staircase.

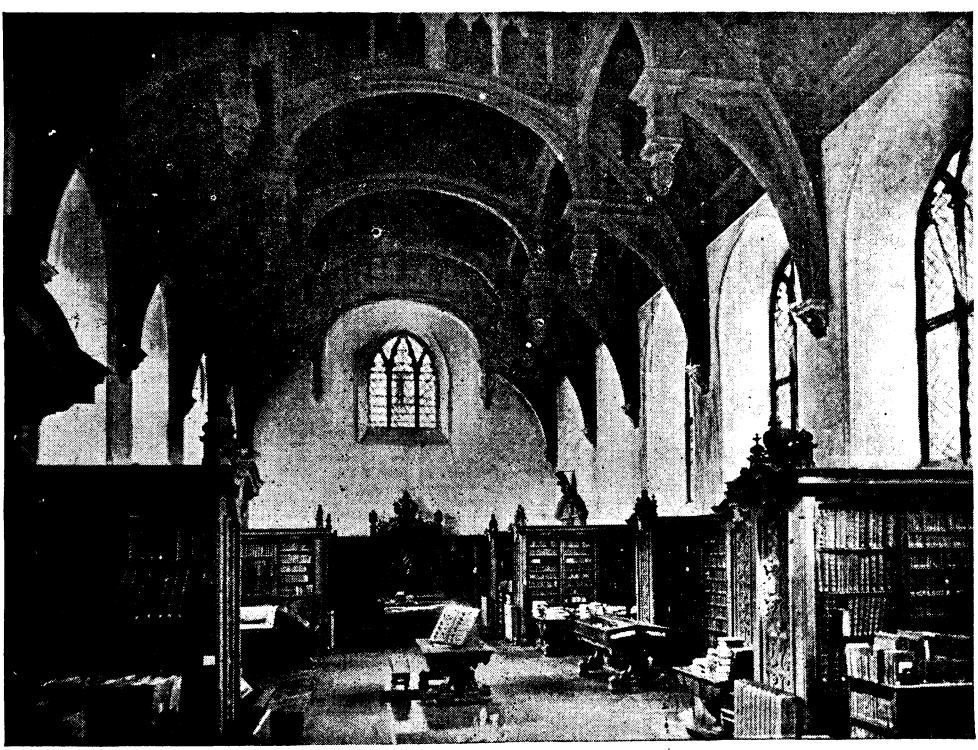
It was in this massive gateway, too, that the simple-living Archbishop Morton had his humble abode. This was on the first floor, and comprised a small sitting-room with an even tinier apartment beyond. This, indeed, is little more than an alcove which contained the Primate's small folding bed.

Though he was at once Lord High Chancellor, a Cardinal of the Church, and Archbishop, Morton received his visitors of State, not in the Great Hall of his Palace, but in an apartment he had built, which was afterwards known as the "Records" or "Muniments" room, from the fact that here in former days were kept the archives of the See of Canterbury until they were removed to a place of greater safety.

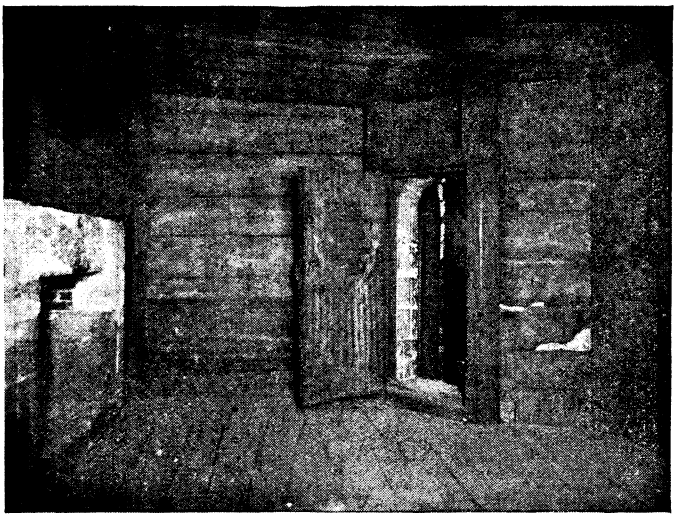
The great hall of Lambeth Palace is at once the principal and most striking feature of the interior. All records of the original building were lost with the destruction of the earlier registers of the Palace in the latter part of the thirteenth century. It is highly probable, however, that this formed part of the original design, since a noble hall of



THE ARCHBISHOP'S STUDY.



THE GREAT HALL, NOW THE LIBRARY.



PRISON IN THE LOLLARDS' TOWER.

this character formed a necessary adjunct to the residence of a pillar of the Church in feudal times. It was in this hall that many of the most famous Primates, notably Robert Winchelsea, Cranmer, and Parker, dispensed princely hospitality.

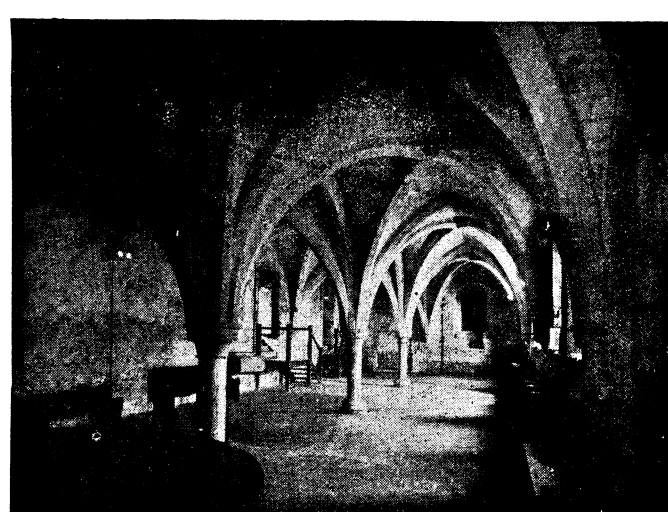
It was here, too, that those popular feasts known as Consecration Banquets took place whenever a new Bishop in the province of Canterbury was consecrated. They were paid for by the new prelate, who had then the privilege of preceding the Archbishop and all others present, and was seated upon a dais raised above the rest of the company, wearing his cap, while the others sat bare-headed. The most magnificent of these banquets was that given by William of Wykeham when he was installed in the See of Winchester in 1367. In later days these dinners were held in the Guard Room of the Palace, and they were only discontinued so comparatively recently as 1845, at the desire of William Wilberforce when he was created Bishop of Oxford.

This hall is beautifully proportioned and is nearly a hundred feet long, fifty feet high, and thirty-eight feet broad. It has witnessed some of the most momentous scenes in the history of the Eng'ish Church.

To-day this stately apartment is usually known as "Juxon's Hall." After the Restoration it was found that the whole of Lambeth Palace had suffered so severely at the hands of the Parliamentarians as to be virtually, in the words of the Primate, "a heap of ruins."

Juxon set to work energetically to restore it and in less than three years expended nearly £15,000 on the work, of which over two-thirds was spent upon the great hall. He determined that the work should be really a *restoration*, despite the efforts of contemporary architects to persuade him to adopt the then prevalent Renaissance style. So anxious indeed was he that the former character of the Palace should be retained that he set out in his Will the proviso, "If I die before the Hall at Lambeth be finished, my executors to be at the charge of finishing it according to the model made of it, if my successor shall give leave."

The striking open roof, which is its chief architectural beauty, shows how largely Juxon's desire was achieved. Here are still to be seen the massive projecting hammer-

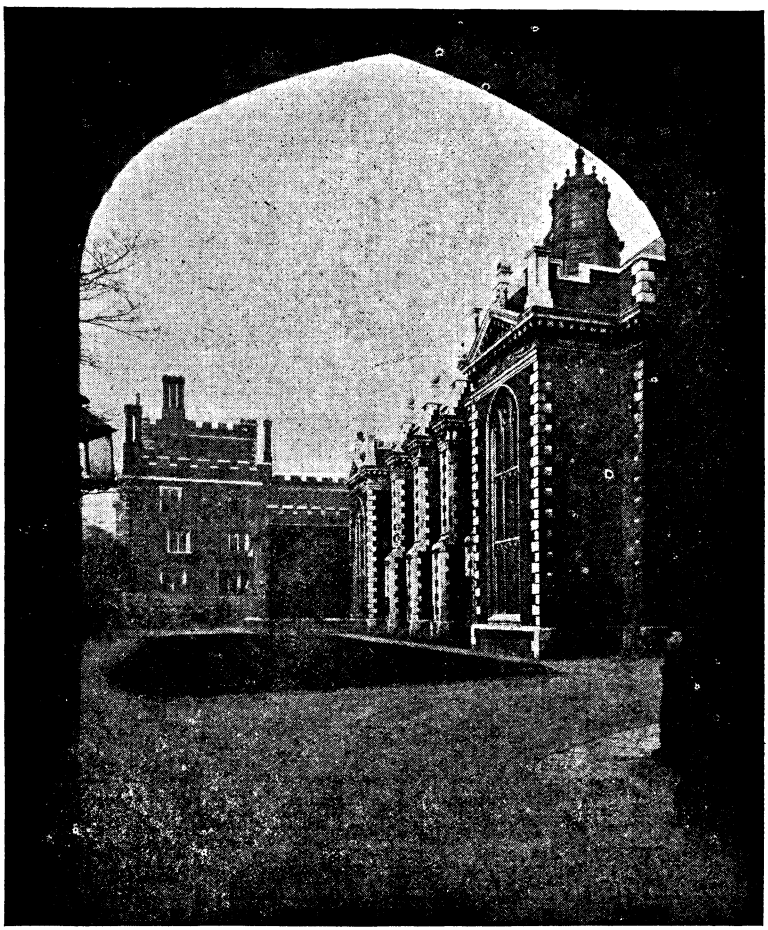


UNDERCRYPT OF CHAPEL.

(Early thirteenth century.)

beams with their upper and under braces that go back certainly to the days of the early Plantagenets, and these may well challenge comparison even with Westminster Hall almost directly across the Thames.

From the centre of this roof rises the lantern bearing a vane upon which appear the arms of the See of Canterbury impaling those of Juxon and crowned by a mitre.



A GLIMPSE OF CRANMER'S TOWER, THE CHAPEL AND THE GREAT HALL.

These arms and the date 1663 also appear upon the heavy leaden gutters that remain on this roof.

From the time of Juxon until that of Archbishop Howley this hall was used but little, and it was Howley who, as already mentioned, adapted it for its present use as a library.

The library is not very extensive, as modern libraries go, not embracing more than about fifty thousand volumes and considerably fewer MSS. What, however, it lacks in quantity is assuredly compensated for in quality, and the value of these treasures, if offered for sale to-day, can only be vaguely guessed at. Prominent among them is the collection of illuminated MSS., about thirty different schools of illuminating being represented. These include unique specimens of the Anglo-Irish, English, French, Flemish, Italian, and Persian styles of decorative work.

Lambeth Palace owes the bulk of its literary treasures to Archbishop Bancroft, while many of the volumes at one time formed part of the library of Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester, the favourite of Queen Elizabeth. His name and arms are to be seen on many of the books that formed part of Bancroft's original bequest.

Other Primates there had been before Bancroft, who assumed office in 1604, who had possessed extensive libraries they had in turn housed at Lambeth Palace. Chicheley, Bouchier, Warham, and Cranmer, to name just a few, were all men of letters and culture, but in no case can their libraries now be definitely traced. We know of Archbishop Parker, however, that he bequeathed " his choice and invaluable MSS. " to " Benet College " (Corpus Christi), Cambridge. Archbishop Laud divided his books between the Bodleian Library and St. the library from Lambeth, he added that, " I give and bequeath them all to the publique library of the University of Cambridge."

This was enforced in 1642, when Lambeth Palace was ravaged by the Parliamentarians and the library was menaced. Laud, then behind prison bars in the Tower, petitioned that " as my house at Lambeth is taken for some public purpose, the library there and my own study of books may be placed in security." It was by the advice of John Selden, commemorated for all time by the



THE GARDEN FRONT.

John's College, Oxford. Archbishop Sancroft, upon his expulsion from the Primacy, devised his books to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, while Archbishop Wake left his books, MSS. and a considerable collection of coins to Christ Church, Oxford.

It was, therefore, left to Archbishop Bancroft really to found the library at Lambeth Palace. In his will he expressly bequeathed the collection to " the Archbishops of Canterbury successively and for ever." He added a clause that was destined to preserve the library when it was in grave danger of destruction. In the event of any attempt to alienate " Selden End " of the Bodleian, that the University of Cambridge pressed its claim to the library, which was thus saved and returned intact to Lambeth when Gilbert Sheldon became Primate.

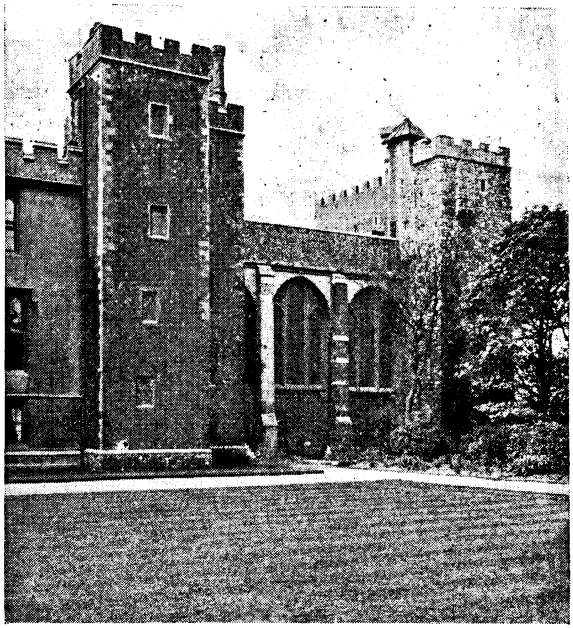
Second only in importance or in interest of association to the great hall is the old Guard Room of Lambeth Palace, long since converted into a dining-hall. The name is a reminder of the days when even Archbishops found it necessary to maintain a standing garrison for their protection. The Wars of the Roses may be said to have disposed finally of the necessity for this, and as learning and culture grew the need

for men-at-arms in the palaces of churchmen rapidly disappeared.

The Guard Room at Lambeth was, therefore, converted into an armoury where suits of mail for two hundred soldiers were maintained down to the days of Laud.

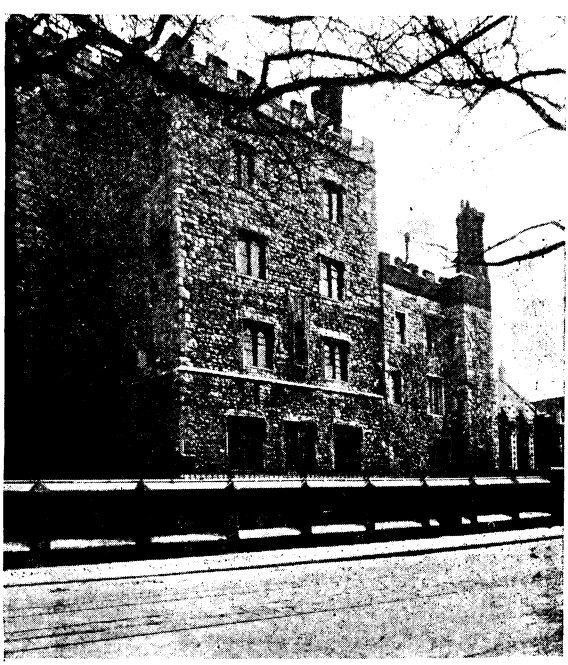
It is just a century since this finely proportioned apartment with its noble roof, a relic of the original structure, was restored by Archbishop Howley and given its present handsome appearance, when it was adapted to its new purpose as a dining-hall. At the same time there was placed here a striking collection of paintings of the Primates from the days of Henry VIII to the present.

There is much more in Lambeth Palace upon which one could write did space permit. Passing reference must, however, be made to the Water Tower, which forms such a conspicuous feature of the exterior. This is often called, though entirely without justification, the "Lollards' Tower." At one time the base was washed by the Thames; hence its correct name. It was from the steps of this tower that Anne Boleyn passed from the gloomy old crypt beneath the chapel where the decree of divorce, which carried death in its train, was pronounced upon her.



THE LOLLARDS' TOWER.

Precisely how legend or tradition came to link this tower with the persecuted Lollards is difficult to say. Successive writers have, however, continued to do so, and even to point to one of the apartments, known as the "Post Room," as having gained that name from a central post to which it is asserted prisoners were tied in order that they might be flogged. As a matter of fact, this post cannot possibly date back farther than the reign of Queen Anne, when it was placed in position to render additional support to a lengthy beam that then showed signs of sagging.



EXTERIOR FACE OF LOLLARDS' TOWER.

Lastly, there is the tiny chapel, which corresponds so closely to the Temple Church as to be clearly contemporaneous with it. It measures only seventy-two feet long by twenty-five feet wide, and its original stained-glass windows, the benefaction of Cardinal Morton (representing the same subject as the present, which were put in by Archbishops Tait and Benson), were among the most beautiful specimens that even the latter part of

the fifteenth century produced. These were destroyed in the days of Cromwell, after having been restored with great care and infinite pains by Laud. It was left to Archbishop Howley and his successor, Archbishop Sumner, to give the chapel its present handsome appearance.

This chapel has been the scene of many noteworthy incidents in the history of the English Church. It was here, for instance, that John Wycliffe, in 1378, stood arraigned before Archbishop Sudbury for his heretical teaching, and it was here that Queen Elizabeth caused the chaplain and comforter of her ill-fated mother, Anne Boleyn (Matthew Parker), to be installed as Primate. Here it was, too, that in due course Parker was buried.

In conclusion it may be said that there is scarcely a foot of Lambeth Palace that is not redolent of the history of England and its Church. This being so, it is a matter for wonder that so few English people ever visit it, the majority of those who pass through its portals year by year being visitors from the Continent or the United States.

PERSONALITIES.

WHEN Nanny takes me to the park,
She often meets
Another nanny, and they talk
And sit on seats :
It's very dull, but if I'm good
They give me sweets.

When Mummy takes me to the park,
We get some bread
To feed the ducks—they come so fast
When they are fed !
I wish that *I* could swim, and stand
Upon *my* head !

When Auntie takes me to the park,
She tells me tales
Of fairies in the flow'rs, and woods
With nightingales,
And mice and moles, that live in holes,
And coloured snails.

When Daddy takes me to the park,
Oh then we go
Out on the lake—he teaches me
The way to row
And all the other jolly things
A man must know !

The time with Nanny's slow—her talk
Seems never done ;
The time with Mummy goes too fast—
We have such fun !
With Auntie, there are lovely things
To hear and see,
But Dad makes such adventures, that
We're late for tea ! !

ANNE STALLEY.

PUTTING THE WEATHER INTO THE PICTURES

By DOROTHY OWSTON-BOOTH

WHEN we see or read of the magnificent edifices that are the screen studios of to-day, it is difficult to realise that only two decades have elapsed since the first film studio, a tiny hut eight feet square, was built. In a new art, however, as in the development of an invention or a discovery, it is the early years which show the most progress; and the art of the cinema is no exception.

The original crudely built film studio was constructed upon a wheeled platform, so that it could be taken out with the actors, enabling both interior and exterior scenes to be photographed in logical sequence. By an ingenious contrivance of pivots, the studio could be swung round to follow the movements of the sun, so that the producer was able to take full advantage of the only medium for photographic lighting at his disposal. Known familiarly to the former Edison Film Company, for whom it was made, as "Black Maria," this tiny studio was considered a marvel of ingenuity. Yet there was no more harassed person in those days than the director of motion pictures, to whom the vagaries of the weather, even in California, were a source of perpetual anxiety and presented insurmountable difficulties.

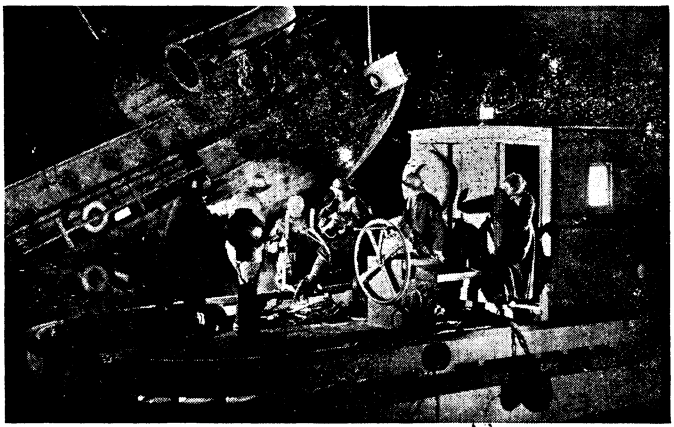
With the portable studio it was simple to take one's company on location and to film particular scenes in the exact background required by the story. It was an altogether different matter to guarantee that the sun would shine as needed, or that heavy rain would fall when specially required. Until a few years ago, in fact, a film play, the production of which demanded exceptional weather conditions, stood little chance of being completed. Few directors have been able to afford to keep a large and expensive cast waiting until a thunder-storm occurred, a violent wind arose, or a rain-storm of sufficiently devastating proportions condescended to sweep over the locality in which the scenes were to be filmed.



[*Vitagraph.*

SALT AND COTTON-WOOL MAKE THIS A REALISTIC SNOW SCENE.

Such disabilities, however, only served to determine producers to find remedies; and



[*Maurice-Tourneur Paramount.*

AN ARC LIGHT GIVING THE ILLUSION OF MOONLIGHT.

the inventive brains of the profession set to work to find means by which they could circumvent the Clerk of the Weather. If it was not possible to have the desired atmospheric conditions to order, they must discover methods of making their own weather.

The first step was to invent a deputy for the sun, an illuminant that would make it possible to screen summer scenes, bathed in glorious sunshine, when the real sun refused to work. As the greater part of every motion picture consists of brightly illuminated exterior or indoor sequences, this was an urgent necessity. In the days when the screen producer was compelled to rely upon actual sunlight, the number of hours wasted, especially during winter months, when the light was too poor for photography, was almost incalculable. Experiments were made with gas and with electricity, until several different kinds of powerful lights were produced. These have been so perfected that it is now possible to give the effect of brilliant tropical sunshine in an outdoor scene built up inside a covered studio, on the dullest, dreariest winter day.

The sunlight arcs, as these enormous illuminants are called, have a lighting power of three million candles each; and to operate one a hundred and fifty amperes of electrical current are required. The artificial sunlight so diffused is so like the real thing as to be undetectable when the film is displayed. It is thus possible for any locality to be duplicated in the studio—a tremendous saving in expense, time and energy. If a producer can get his art director, his property men and his electricians to erect an exact reproduction of the sun-bathed terraces at Monte Carlo in his own studio at Hollywood, California, or even in foggy London, he certainly does not feel inclined to incur the heavy expense of taking a large company of players and assistants to the actual Riviera, especially if only a few sequences, which will flash by in five minutes when the screen-play is projected, are needed. Unless a director is intensely keen on realism, or is so heavily backed financially that he need not consider cost, he will go a long distance only when the entire film has its setting in one definitely prescribed place.

Though these immense sunlight arcs weigh about seven hundred pounds, they



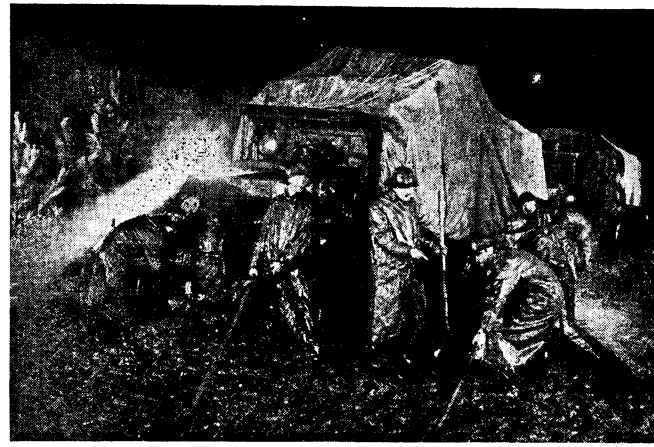
[*Vitagraph.*

A FLOOD SCENE.

This was engineered with the assistance of Nature by damming a tidal creek and breaking the dam when the tide was at its fullest.

can easily be moved into any position in the studio, as they are mounted on wheeled platforms. Some, suspended from the roof on stout cables, give the effect of overhead sunshine. Conveyed in motor lorries, with their own generating plant, they are also taken out on location with the company, to augment, or to deputise for, the sun when necessary.

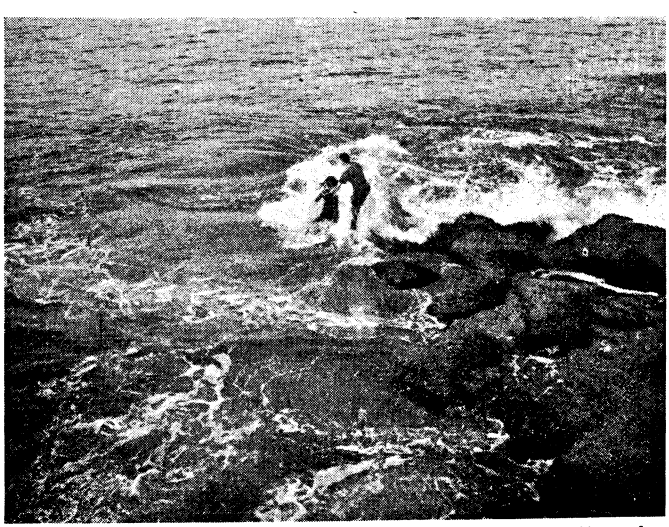
Other lights can be used in the studios to give the appearance of moonlight, of faintly diffused river mist, of sunset, and of pale sunrise, as well as of brilliant noonday sunshine or the subdued light in a heavily furnished room. The dull grey river mist which was such a well-remembered feature of that artistic screen classic, "Broken Blossoms," was effected by the combined efforts of a special grade of arc light playing upon smoke gently wafted over the "set" by a slow-motion electric fan. D. W. Griffiths is a past-master in the production of artistic artificial weather effects, and "Broken Blossoms" was one of his finest efforts in this respect. In the film version of "Bella Donna," Pola Negri appeared in one scene enveloped in a true London fog. This was produced in similar manner by a specially contrived system of lighting and smoke-clouds, the latter being diffused by an enormous incinerator. The smoke was driven on to the "set" and then kept motionless by an arrangement of screens which precluded all draughts or movements of air. Painted backcloths, with clever fog effects, were also used to heighten the illusion.



REALISM.

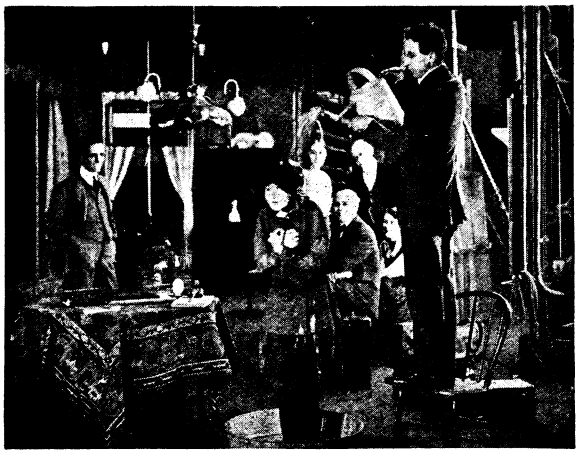
Storm scenes, enabling motor lorries to be photographed at night, in pelting rain, and making their way through inches of mud, present no great difficulty to the producer.

Location trips are still made when woodland, forest, hillside, sea coast, garden or town scenes can be obtained easily in the vicinity. Such short journeys, of course, save the cost of studio building and are generally more realistic. Location work, however, is the most harassing part of a film director's existence. The weather plays perpetual pranks, even in California; and the trials facing British producers do not need to be described. Though the sunlight arcs are of incalculable assistance on dull days, they cannot dispel rain, and are useless during a thunder-storm. During wet weather the only course possible to a film company on location is to wait, as



[*Vitagraph.*

UTILISING A REAL SEA-STORM IN A PICTURE FOR "TIDES OF PASSION."



[*Famous Players-Lasky.*

RAIN TO ORDER.

Preparing the heroine for a "close-up" in which she has to appear with rain pouring off her hat and a drenched coat.

patiently as may be, until the rain ceases. On a recent trip to Texas for the filming of realistic cattle-ranch scenes, Richard Dix and his company were held up for eight weeks through perverse weather conditions. Almost as soon as the company reached the ranch, there broke over the countryside the worst storms known for many years; and the trip, which should have occupied a week, extended to two months of weary waiting in an isolated, flooded ranch. At the same time another company making exterior scenes at the Famous-Lasky ranch near Hollywood escaped the heavy rains by simply climbing to the summit of Mount Hollywood and filming their sunny exteriors above the rain-clouds.

On the other hand, when rain is essential for certain scenes the director may be compelled to wait for days, even for weeks, for the clouds to play their part in the realistic production of the story. Artificial rain, or the mechanism for its production, is an important part of the equipment of an up-to-date studio. If the rain scenes are to be photographed in the studio, the "set" is arranged in a particular corner set aside for such purposes. Here there is a special floor, prepared of thick, tarred paper, over perforated steel which covers an enormous tank. This makes it possible to deluge a scene with heavy rain without flooding the entire studio. Overhead is arranged a system of tubes and rotary sprinklers, similar in construction to the familiar revolving spray used for watering lawns. If a slight shower is required a small volume of water only is sent through the sprinklers, and the latter are rotated slowly. Heavier volumes of water and a more rapid movement of the sprays increase the severity of the shower and make a downpour. The effect of a tempestuous rain-storm is given by the aid of wind machines or large electric fans which drive the "rain" in gusts around the actors of the scene.

When the rainy scene is filmed out-of-doors, on location or in the studio's open ranch, a rain-making rigging on the same principle as that already described is used. It consists of a long pipe, equipped with revolving sprinklers set at intervals along the entire length, which is held up in the air, in a horizontal position, supported at either end by a tripod about twenty feet high. At one end of the pipe a hose is connected to supply the storm or showers, as the case may be. If the location is in a remote neighbourhood, it is necessary to



[*Famous Players-Lasky.*

A RAIN SCENE.

The rain comes from giant sprays, and the camera has to be protected by an umbrella.

reinforce this rigging by carrying a tank of water and a small dynamo for forcing it through the pipe to the height of the sprinklers. The wind machines accompany the rain equipment if a violent storm is required.

Sometimes the scenario of a film requires an actor or actress to appear drenched through as though having been caught in a heavy storm, though the actual rain scenes are not shown on the screen. In such instances the player has to submit to being saturated by water from a watering-can or garden hosepipe. Esther Ralston tells that one of the most unpleasant moments in her screen career was the occasion on which she had to spend an uncomfortable five minutes standing in a zinc bath while a "shower of rain" was poured over her from a watering-can.

The wind machines used in the production of rain-storms, hurricanes, tornadoes and tempests are equipped with propellers similar to those of an aeroplane. These are driven by a powerful dynamo, the whole machine being fixed on a heavy, wheeled chassis. A scene in "What Fools Men" shows a devastating tornado bursting upon a picnic party in a wooded park. This was produced in the company's new exterior studio at Burbank, California, which has an area of seventy-five acres and is fitted with the latest and most perfect machinery for weather production. So realistic was the tornado in this particular picture, that the players had little difficulty in registering an expression of horror. Many were lifted right off their feet and several sustained slight injuries through being buffeted against the trees. A similar cyclone, produced in the same studio for a film entitled "Tramp, Tramp, Tramp," was so true to life that members of the company had to be "anchored" to prevent them from being blown off the "set" before they had completed the scene. A house specially constructed for the picture was completely destroyed.



[First National Studios.

A TORNADO MADE WITH THE AID OF POWERFUL WIND MACHINES.

Spectacular "close-ups" of Doris Kenyon, Vivian Ogden and Drew Demarest in "The Unguarded Hour" were recently made in an indoor studio. The players were photographed in an aeroplane which, according to the story, was caught in a violent storm at a height of five thousand feet. For the purpose of the film the aeroplane was suspended from the roof by wires; a large hosepipe was turned upon the three actors seated therein; the aeroplane's own pro-

peller helped to drive the "rain" in gusts all over the machine, while other propellers fastened just above and out of range of the camera added to the effect. To give the illusion of an aeroplane in movement through the storm it was alternately raised and lowered. The screams and terrified cries of the deluged actresses, whose mouths, ears and eyes were filled with water, were not entirely due to their histrionic ability!

Of all weather effects snow is perhaps the most easy to produce and yet the most unsatisfactory in appearance on the screen. Unless very carefully faked, snow scenes appear to be exactly what they are—imitated Nature. In the earliest film plays "snow showers" were produced by tiny particles of white paper shaken from a height above the players. This was far from being realistic and was abandoned as soon as motion pictures became an art rather than a curiosity. The next experiments were made with salt and cotton-wool. Covered with coarse crushed salt and tiny flecks of cotton-wool, houses, rocks and trees gave a fair illusion of having weathered a snow-storm; but neither substance gave the effect of falling snow.

Then a new substitute for snow was invented by an astute property man, and though this was more realistic, it still had the drawback that it was useless when the appearance of actually falling snow was needed. The new artificial snow consisted of coarse salt mixed with particles of asbestos to give a flaky appearance and with mica to make it as iridescent as real snow.

While making scenes for the J. M. Barrie film, "A Kiss For Cinderella," the director of the property department was faced with this problem of falling snow. For the accurate rendering of the story it was essential that Betty Bronson, the star of the picture, should be shown sleeping on a London kerbstone in a snow-storm at night. Many experiments were made without success. By a lucky coincidence an outsider had a brilliant idea and sent it to Mr. Seymour, the property director, though totally unaware of the immediate necessity. A salesman in a cereal factory, this benefactor to the art while visiting a local cinema, was struck with the unreality of a snow scene on the screen. At the factory, next day, he happened to be on the spot when a sack of flaked wheat husks burst, scattering the contents. He was immediately interested in the flakiness of the husks and the way in which they fluttered and fell. Here, he felt, was a far more realistic snow-storm than the one he had witnessed the previous evening. Here, also, he conceived, was a new market for this waste product of his trade. He sent to the Paramount Studio, offering the suggestion and submitting a sample of the flaky husks. The result is a new mixture—artificial snow absolutely realistic. It falls flakily; it looks like snow on the ground; it drifts and piles up like snow; and it is reasonable in cost. A small quantity of mica is mixed with the wheat to make it glisten.

Motion picture stories which are based almost entirely upon snow countries, like Charlie Chaplin's "The Gold Rush," "Baree, Son of Kazan," and other tales of the North, will continue to be made in actual snow localities. But for films in which a few scenes only need snow the new discovery will prove invaluable.

Luck sometimes favours even screen directors and gives them an honest-to-goodness, natural storm or flood just at the moment required. When John Barrymore was making "The Sea Beast," an amazing piece of screen realism was secured through one of the worst storms that has ever raged on the Pacific Coast occurring while the com-



[*Ince-Paramount Artcraft.*

SALT AND COTTON-WOOL MAKE THE SNOW IN THIS SCENE.

pany were making scenes on the whaling ship. The company were marooned on board and took the opportunity of playing their storm episodes to the accompaniment of thunder and lightning, blinding rain and tempestuous winds. Barrymore actually took the wheel for a considerable period and steered the vessel through the storm. Similar good fortune was the lot of the company making "Aloma of the South Seas." The director had taken his cast to Porto Rico for the South Sea Island sequences. A storm episode occurs in the story; and, providentially, one of the worst storms ever known in the West Indies greeted the company on arrival; so that the camera men were able to capture some most thrilling hurricane effects.



CHARLIE CHAPLIN, IN A REAL SNOW SCENE, VIEWS THE LONG STRAGGLING TRAIL OF GOLD-SEEKERS IN "THE GOLD RUSH."

Other directors, not so fortunate, have been compelled to make their own storms. For that powerful film, "On the Banks of the Wabash," the director obtained permission to dam a wide river creek until sufficient water was stored to make a real flood. On spare ground in front of the dam was built the village to be destroyed by the storm and consequent flood. When all was ready the dam was removed by mechanical means, the wind machines and the rain sprinklers were set in motion, and magnesium wire added to electrical flashes gave realistic lightning. Such storms are often produced for motion pictures.

BOWL BULBS.

DON'T you think they deserve a rhyme—
Our indoor bulbs at wintertime?
When we're chilled in body, numbed in soul,
Untended they rise from the shallow bowl,
Fragrant and fresh, of every hue,
White and crimson, yellow and blue—
Beams of brightness when all is gloom,
Signals of spring in a sunless room.

Month by month they dimly slept,
Till something within them thrilled and leapt.
Down, unseen, pushed the filament root,
Up, unnoticed, the first green shoot.
And, to-day, we watch their flowers unfold
In rose and lavender, scarlet and gold—
So, don't you think they deserve a rhyme—
Our indoor bulbs in the wintertime?

JESSIE POPE.



WHEN IT IS 2*s.* 0*d.* PER YARD.



AND WHEN IT IS 1*s.* 11¾*d.* PER YARD.

THOSE SALES AGAIN.

A LABOUR OF HERCULES

By MRS. BELLOC LOWNDES

ILLUSTRATED BY HENRY COLLER

"YOU would have been wise to stay on for another ten years at the *Sureté*. Our work is becoming more and more easy, especially with regard to the foreign section, in which you excelled."

Hercules Popeau and Jean Copain, his successor at the redoubtable Criminal Investigation Department of the Paris Police, had just dined in a famous restaurant on the left side of the Seine. They had been talking over old days, and had sat long over their coffee; so it was close on midnight when they began pacing homewards through the cold, deserted streets.

"Queer things still happen, even if many of them, as the English say, are settled out of court. I have come across, even in the short time I have been living at the Hotel Paragon, one or two very peculiar occurrences, and each time foreigners were involved."

"What sort of occurrences?"

"In one case a charming woman was nearly destroyed by poison by another charming woman who wished to marry the first charming woman's husband."

"That sort of thing is always going on all over the world! It isn't confined to our beautiful Paris, or to your respectable Hotel Paragon. Still, I am surprised that anything ever happens there, for it's more like a private house than an hotel."

Popeau smiled. "That's why I went to live there! But, as a matter of fact, the hotel is chock-full just now, as we're just on New Year's Day. Unluckily the owners of the place have their adored only daughter married in Algiers. They went off a fortnight ago, leaving a sister of Madame la Patronne in charge, and I don't care either for the woman or for her husband."

Then the two old friends and sometime colleagues parted; Hercules Popeau to find his way into the now darkened courtyard of the palatial mansion, now the Hotel Paragon, which played a part in the social history of eighteenth-century Paris. He pulled the hall door bell, and a moment later the door swung open, the mechanism being worked by the concierge lying snugly tucked up in his warm bed.

Groping his way across the vestibule, the new-comer walked up the broad staircase and without troubling to switch on the electric light, turned into the corridor which led to his comfortable rooms—a bedroom and a sitting-room—on the first floor.

All at once, to his left, he heard, startlingly near, the words uttered in English, "For God's sake stop and listen to what I have to say. I am in great danger."

It was a young voice, a woman's voice, threaded with a note of supplication and terror. The startled listener told himself that the human being who had flung that wild appeal into the night, must have been standing close to the other side of one of the closed doors of the bedrooms which overlooked the garden of the hotel.

"Who are you, and from which room are you speaking?" he exclaimed.

Then he heard another voice, also a woman's, speaking angrily in some form of Spanish dialect, and there came an answer in the same queer lingo, the voice which answered being that which had made that piteous appeal in English.

He waited, listening, for a long time, but there came no further sound, and the cavernous, pre-Revolution mansion seemed sunk in a silence which could be felt. So at last, with reluctant footsteps, he started walking again down the high-ceilinged corridor.

The moment Hercules Popeau awoke next morning it was as if he heard again the pleading cry, "I am in great danger." Why not find out at once who occupied the

room whence that appeal had been flung? Putting out his hand, he rang his bell three times. That meant that he wished to see the temporary *patronne* of the hotel, Madame Bonnefon, herself. She came at last, looking flustered, for she was very, very busy.

"I want to know," he said abruptly, "who are occupying the rooms overlooking the garden, say three rooms from my sitting-room, near the head of the staircase. Are they English people?"

Madame Bonnefon hesitated. Then she answered reluctantly, "No, monsieur, they are not English. They are rich Argentines, and do not speak much French."

"A married couple?"

"Yes, a very nice old-fashioned lady and gentleman."

"What is their name?"

"That, Monsieur Popeau, I cannot tell you. But my husband could do so. It is something like Mataria or Paria."

"Just a husband and wife, eh?"

He saw her face alter slightly, as she replied, "They have their daughter with them."

"Indeed. How old is she?"

"I could not tell you without referring to the form the gentleman filled up."

"How old do you think she is?"

He suspected that Madame Bonnefon was concealing something, and the fact roused his curiosity.

"I should think," answered the woman hesitatingly, "that the demoiselle may be eighteen to twenty."

Popeau suddenly exclaimed, "What is the matter with this young woman? Come, come, Madame Bonnefon—— I know that there is something wrong!"

"It is nothing catching, Monsieur Popeau." She spoke now in a frightened tone. "Of that I can assure you, for I have seen the doctor who is attending the young lady."

"What did he tell you?"

Madame Bonnefon looked very uncomfortable.

"Out with it!" said Popeau, in a not unkindly tone. "Surely your sister told you that I am a very old friend of hers? Also," he waited a moment, "as you must certainly know, I am attached to the *Sureté*. It's my business to know everything that is going on under the roof of the house where I live. I must request you to tell me at once and clearly what the doctor of these people told you."

"From you, Monsieur Popeau," cried the woman, "I have nothing to conceal! The truth about this poor young lady is that she is an imbecile. Her parents are going to put her under the charge of a doctor who takes just a few patients. She is not mad, or of course I should have refused to have her, even for one moment, in my brother-in-law's hotel."

"Have you seen her?" asked Hercules Popeau.

"I have not seen the poor young girl. All her food is taken into the room next to which she sleeps—that which is occupied by her parents. There are communicating doors between the two rooms."

"Then does the mother do the girl's bedroom herself?" asked Popeau with some curiosity.

"Oh no, monsieur. One of our good housemaids goes in and does the room every day. But she does not see the girl, for while the room is being done in the afternoon, the poor young thing goes into her father's room and sits there. Both her parents are quite devoted to her; they never leave her entirely alone; either her father or her mother is always with her."

"What doctor has charge of the case? Can you tell me that?"

"Yes," said the woman, glad to be able to speak freely at last. "His name is Nantes. He has a very nice establishment at Passy."

"Have you any idea how long they are staying on here?"

"They had intended to leave before the new year, but there has been some difficulty with regard to the young lady, so they are staying on."

After Hercules Popeau had got up and dressed, he went into his sitting-room, took the receiver off his telephone, and got through to Jean Copain's office at the *Sureté*.

"There's a little affair going on here about which I may want your help. Will you lunch with me to-day at the place we dined at last night?"

"Certainly I will, and remember, good friend, that I'm always at your service. It was a black day for us when you left."

Putting on his hat and coat, he walked past the sitting-room which lay, he felt sure, between his own rooms and that whence had come that strange cry of fear and appeal.

He stopped and listened.

From the sitting-room there issued the uproarious cheerful voices of an Irish family

party finishing breakfast, and making their plans for the day. He went on a few steps, and then he stood still again, choosing a spot between the two doors of the rooms which he now knew belonged to the Argentine couple and their daughter. But all he could hear were the loud voices of the happy party of young Irish folk.

Suddenly they all came streaming out, scattering to their various bedrooms, and stillness fell on the air. He held his breath, but no sound issued from either of the rooms. And yet, if what Madame Bonnefon had told him was true, there was a sadly afflicted girl on the other side of one of these high, light-grey painted doors.

He put out his hand; slowly he turned the handle nearest to him. The door was locked.

"Is anyone there?" he called out in English, rattling the handle as he spoke. But there came no answer.

Retracing his steps along the corridor, and making this time as much noise as he could, he turned and threw his weight, which was considerable, against one of the doors. Then there came at once the sound of a woman's angry voice, and in guttural, illiterate French were called out the words —"What is that? Be careful!"



"Retracing his steps along the corridor . . . ne threw his weight, which was considerable, against one of the doors."

II.

HERCULES POPEAU and his guest, Jean Copain, were still eating with leisurely enjoyment the *hors d'œuvres* for which the restaurant was famous, when the new chief of the *Sureté* exclaimed, "Well, it's an

interesting little story you've told me. In fact it would make an excellent first chapter for a detective yarn in which a noble young man, preferably an English officer, rescues a beautiful young girl from villains, and in the end there comes, as in a charming English novel, the sound of wedding bells."

"Then you are inclined to think—what are you inclined to think?" asked Popeau.

"I'm inclined to think that this young woman has the mania of persecution; a sadly common form of insanity. From what you tell me, she is mad, not an imbecile. However, my dear Popeau, I am willing to help you to find out the truth. You say the name of the doctor who is attending her is Nantes? It would be an easy matter to get in touch with him. I suppose you've already thought of doing that? Let's get the head waiter to bring us a Bottin, and we'll look him out."

The huge grey-bound directory was soon lying on the table before the two men, and Hercules Popeau turned to the section where the names of all Paris registered medical practitioners are put in alphabetical order. He ran his finger down to the end of the list. Then he looked up, "There is no Nantes."

"An unregistered practitioner? I must look into this."

He sought the street directory, and soon found *Nantes* at an address in Passy. "I expect this is our man."

They talked of other things for a while; then Popeau said suddenly, "Though you are more probably right than wrong, I confess I should like to *see* the young woman whose voice I heard raised in supplication last night."

"According to Madame Bonnefon, you'll find it difficult to do that. I don't see you disguised as a housemaid," and the other burst into good-natured laughter.

"Disguised as a housemaid?" Those half-jeering words gave Hercules Popeau a sudden idea. But he said nothing to the other man of what had come into his mind; he could see that Jean Copain thought he had got hold of a mare's nest. So, after having treated his friend to an excellent lunch, he hailed a cab and drove him back to the great frowning building where is housed the Scotland Yard of France, *La Sureté*.

"I think I'll go and have a chat with our old clothes man," he observed.

"How delightful it must be to feel as you do, absolutely free to idle! As for me, I've a terrible day in front of me. Fifteen appointments to get through before night, and fearful decisions to take on my own responsibility. People talk of the Judgment of Solomon? It was nothing to some of the judgments *I* have to deliver!"

Hercules Popeau hurried down the once-familiar passages till at last he reached a big bare room lined with deep cupboards.

A weary-looking old man was sitting by the stove, but his face brightened when he saw who his visitor was. He shambled to his feet: "How wise you were, *patron*, to leave this dungeon while you were still young and vigorous!"

"Young? No. Vigorous?" Hercules Popeau laughed. "Well, I certainly feel far from decrepit. Even so I often long to be back here; time sometimes hangs very heavy on my hands."

"It hangs heavy on *my* hands," grumbled the other. "Here I sit doing nothing all day long. No one ever comes near me, for our young men no longer think it worth while to disguise themselves. They think they know a trick worth two of that. The *Sureté* was a far nicer place before we had the telephone and the wireless."

"I should not be at all ashamed of disguising myself. In fact, I've come here to know if you have anything big enough to transform me into a stone-mason, eh?"

"I've got the very thing you want! But you'll run the risk of catching a bad cold."

He opened one of his vast cupboards. It was full of workmen's clothes of every type, description, and size.

Pulling out a big blue and grey bundle, "How about this?" he asked, and he began shaking the garments apart.

"The very thing!" cried Popeau, delighted. "And now I'm going to tell you something you'll find it hard to believe."

"What's that?"

"This is the very first time I shall ever have worn a regular disguise."

"Are you serious?"

Popeau was already undressing himself. "It's absolutely true. I've often pretended to be what I was not, and of course I've sometimes worn clothes that I should not have worn had I not been 'on the job.' But never once have I felt, till to-day, even the wish to disguise myself—well, like this!"

He was getting into the wide blue linen trousers of a make worn by most old-fashioned French working-men, as he spoke.

But after he had drawn on a rough, not over-clean, woollen jersey, he looked dubiously at the various forms of headgear that

the other brought to his notice. "I think I'll have to buy some kind of cap," he said at last. "I don't like the look of any of those. Besides, I don't believe there's one here that would fit my big head."

"I don't think there is. Still, the cap is all-important, eh?, if you want to look really what you've set out to be. If you don't mind waiting here for a bit, I'll run out and get you the right kind of cap. But I'll have to take your hat, just for the size."

"Thank you very much, old friend. That's the sort of job you'll do far better than I could do it myself. Try and get me something that won't look objectionably new, eh?"

"Why, even our overpaid workmen have to get a new hat sometimes," said the other, chuckling.

An hour later a small cart across which was balanced, precariously, a long ladder, jolted into the courtyard of the Hotel Paragon. The beautiful old house looked deserted, for early afternoon was the one time when almost everyone was out, especially on a fine winter day. Monsieur and Madame Bonnefon, as Hercules Popeau was well aware, always took a siesta from three to four. The concierge, however, came out of the door, and called out suspiciously, "What are you doing?"

"What we've been told to do," said the older workman sharply. "I and my comrade have been sent by the Municipal Council to take a cast of one of these eighteenth-century gollywogs you've got over your windows. I don't suppose you're aware, poor ignorant one, that your hotel is an historical monument."

As he spoke, he and his comrade were taking the ladder off the cart.

"Now then? How can we get into your garden? We've got to take our cast from above one of the back windows."

"You'll have to come through the hall," said the concierge. He had a wholesome dread of the Paris municipal authorities.

The two workmen took their ladder through the grand old house into the now wintry garden. There they waited till the concierge reluctantly went back into the hall.

"I confess that I felt very much afraid that he'd recognise me," said Popeau, drawing a long breath.

"You were wise not to take your cap off," observed the other, grinning. "And now against which window shall I put the ladder?"

"The third window from the end, on the first floor," and he helped his subordinate to place the ladder against the wall of the house.

With the younger man holding it steady, Hercules Popeau began going up the ladder with slow, careful steps.

Was he on a wild-goose chase? He wondered! Even so his heart beat a little as he reached the window of the room where he believed the girl who had flung out that strange S.O.S. was almost certainly imprisoned against her will.

Eagerly he peered through the tiny aperture between the curtains shrouding the high French window. For a moment he saw nothing, then he began to distinguish the interior of a large room which was in shape almost exactly like his own study. In the room were two beds, not side by side, but each in a corner of the room, the door giving into the corridor being between them.

On the left-hand bed a stout woman was now lying down, fully dressed. And in a chair, close by the fireplace, reclined a slight figure, that of a young girl who looked asleep. Her face was very white, her lips were curiously bloodless.

He knocked impatiently on the closed window. But neither the woman on the bed, nor the girl lying back in the arm-chair, stirred. At last he shouted roughly, "Open this window!"

The woman on the bed rolled off it, and stood, a rather grotesque-looking figure, on the rug, staring across at the closed window. Her face was flushed, and she looked both surprised and angry.

"Open the window!" called out Hercules Popeau again.

Slowly, and with evident reluctance, she came over and undid the iron latch which held the two halves of the window together.

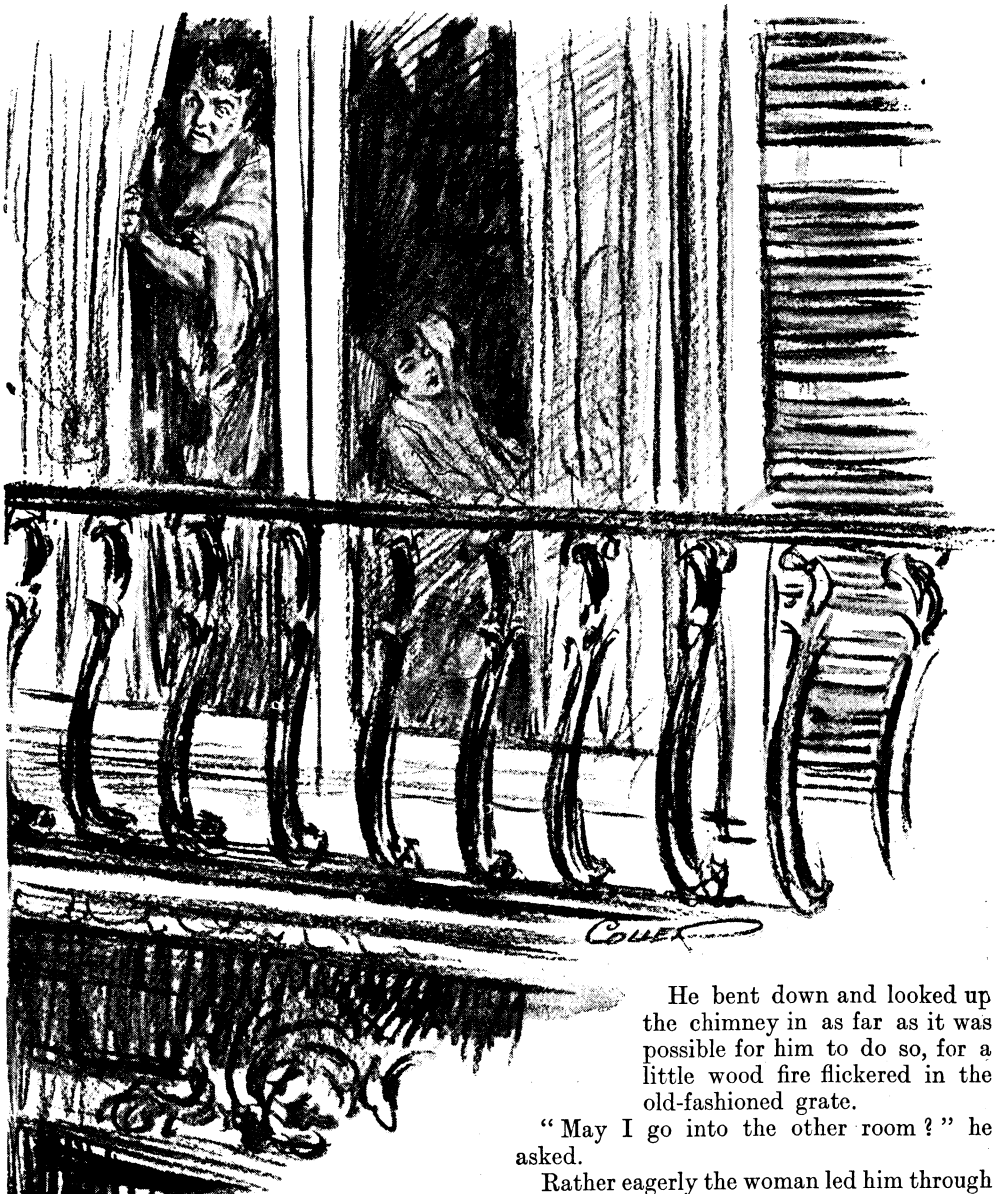
Before she could say anything, her unwelcome visitor climbed over the wrought-iron balustrade, and stepped on to the floor. "Accept my excuses, madame," he said courteously. "This hotel is one of the historical monuments of the town of Paris. Mine is the duty of inspecting the roof, and the outside walls; there is something wrong with the chimney of this room, so you must allow me to examine it."

"Certainly you can do so."

Hercules Popeau looked fixedly at the pale girl who lay back as if asleep in the



"'Open the window!' called out Hercules Popeau again."



arm-chair. But that she was breathing, she might have been dead, so colourless, so expressionless, was her face. Popeau told himself that it would have been plain to a man far less experienced than himself that she had been heavily drugged. She did not even stir at the sound of a voice which he made purposely loud.

"Is the young lady ill?" he asked.

"She is not very well," said the older woman shortly.

He bent down and looked up the chimney in as far as it was possible for him to do so, for a little wood fire flickered in the old-fashioned grate.

"May I go into the other room?" he asked.

Rather eagerly the woman led him through the door into an apartment very like the room that they had just left, excepting that there was only one bed, and also that in some ways it looked more like a sitting-room than a bedroom. On a round table in the middle of the room stood a syphon of soda-water, two glasses, and a bottle of old brandy. "She has been having some of that good cognac," thought Popeau to himself.

He went across to the chimney-piece, and there made a rather elaborate pretence of looking up the chimney. After having done that, he came back to where the woman was watching him.

"Why did you not come up through the house?" she asked suddenly.

"We are ordered to make all our examinations from the exterior," he answered severely.

III.

LATE that same afternoon Hercules Popeau came back to the hotel clothed in his usual grey suit, and warm great-coat. As he walked into the hall Madame Bonnefon came forward. "There are two gentlemen waiting for you upstairs," she said in a low voice.

"Two gentlemen?" he cried vexedly. "I thought I had made it quite clear to you the day you arrived, that *no one* was ever to be shown up into my room when I was out."

"Oh, but these gentlemen come from the police. They had been telephoning constantly since two o'clock, for they were most anxious to know where you were. But of course I couldn't tell them, Monsieur Popeau," and she shrugged her shoulders.

He hurried up to his sitting-room to find there not only Jean Copain, but with the head of the *Sureté*, a slender young man whom Popeau at once knew for no Frenchman.

"My dear chief! I feel very much honoured by this visit."

"I have always longed to see your new home, and I was glad to have an excuse for coming here."

Meanwhile Hercules Popeau's mind was working hard. He was far more surprised than he would have cared to admit. What did this unexpected visit portend? Something grave without a doubt. He wondered very much who the young stranger could be.

"Do you wish to have a word alone with me?" he asked in a low tone.

"I can say all I have to say here," said the other quickly, "for this young fellow does not know a word of French. He is in the Argentine meat trade, and so speaks good English."

He took his host by the sleeve, and led him across to one of the windows.

"You remember," he said in a low voice, "your story of the girl who called out to you the other night? I have to confess that you were right and I wrong in my diagnosis of the case. That girl did well to cry out to you for help! If, that is, the story of this young man I have brought to see you is to be relied on. Also, it is just possible—for truth is infinitely stranger than fiction—that these people who are staying in this hotel, this old couple and their so-called daughter, may have absolutely nothing to do with this young man. After all, there are just now hundreds of family parties composed of a father, mother, and daughter, staying in Paris for the New Year."

"I don't understand," said Popeau impatiently. "You are speaking in riddles, Copain."

"I am even now awaited by the President of the Chamber, so I haven't time to tell you the story. Also, I only heard it through our Spanish interpreter. This young gentleman was brought to me by someone from the Argentine Legation, so we can rely, I suppose, on his story being substantially true. You speak excellent English; ask him to tell you what has brought him to Paris. In any case, I propose now to leave the matter in your hands."

"If you do that," said Popeau firmly, "I must feel that I am invested with exactly the same power as if you were seeing the matter through yourself."

"Is it necessary to make that stipulation?" exclaimed the other.

Popeau felt touched. "I don't know that it is. But one has to go very warily, especially when one is dealing with people of foreign nationality."

"You have my full authority to do anything and everything you think right, with regard to this affair!"

"By the way, could you send along at once, say within twenty minutes, that clever young doctor of ours who can speak Spanish and English? Ask him to wait for me in the hall downstairs. His services will almost certainly be needed by me."

Popeau waited till the other man had had time to leave the hotel. Then he rang the bell. He had but a few moments to wait, for Madame Bonnefon felt very curious.

"Bring me a bottle of your best old burgundy, and a soda syphon. Also some cake."

He turned to the young man. "I'm afraid you're very tired. Did you have any lunch?" he asked in English.

The other shook his head.

"Well, before you tell me your story, I should like to see you take just a glassful of really good wine, and a slice of cake."

"I would rather begin my story at once!"

"All right. Tell me as shortly and clearly as possible what business has brought you to Paris, and what you want our police to do for you."

The young man rose from his chair, and began his tale with a good deal of emotion.

"My fiancée, Pepita Exuvoro, has been

brought from her home in Argentine to Paris by her guardians, Antonio Varia and his wife. They desire to retain in their possession the income coming from big estates owned by Pepita, their ward. I have known the girl all her life, but for some years I saw very little of her, for these wretches caused her to lead a most unnatural and desperately lonely life. We fell in love, and our engagement was just about to be made public when my fiancée disappeared!"

Popeau gave a searching look into the young man's troubled face.

"What are your own circumstances, monsieur?"

"My circumstances," he said quietly, "are good. I am not a very rich man, neither am I a poor man. I am a partner in a business that I inherited from my father. But I have given up everything for the moment, in order to find Pepita. I have tracked her to Paris; but where she is being hidden by her guardians remains a mystery. That is why my cousin, who is Minister to your country from mine, took me to the *Sureté*."

"And what do you believe has been done with your fiancée?"

"Though they appear a most ordinary couple, the Varias have a bad record—I mean as regards business. The man has failed twice, and he is in desperate need of money. They have been saying for some time now that Pepita had become peculiar in her ways; eccentric, in a word mad. By a most fortunate chance a maid who has been many years in my fiancée's service, and who is devoted to her, managed to get hold of a letter which had been sent to Pepita's aunt from Paris. Monsieur Copain had a copy made of it. Here is the original."

Popeau held out his hand eagerly.

105, Rue St. Cloud, Passy.

Madame,

In answer to your letter I beg to state that I shall have a vacancy ready for the young lady whom you tell me you wish to place in my charge early in the new year. I note that she is not dangerously insane. Rely on my absolute discretion.

Yours with respect,

L. Nantes.

Popeau folded up the letter, and handed it back to the young man.

"You are quite sure," he said slowly, "that your fiancée is not insane? That, in a word, she is normal?"

"She is as normal," exclaimed the other, "as you or I, sir! She was at a school kept by some English nuns, and was regarded as a particularly intelligent girl. I have been in touch with the good sisters."

"How old is she?"

"Nineteen." He stopped abruptly, for Madame Bonnefon had come in with the cake and the wine.

After she had gone, Popeau observed, "I wonder why these people chose to come to Paris now?"

"They had an all-important reason! In our country, that is by the Argentine law, a girl comes of age on her marriage day, and any property she may have is then handed over to her, even if she is not twenty-one. It was this fact that caused these brutes to make this fearful plot. No words can explain to you, sir, the agony of mind I have endured and am enduring! Do you think you will be able to help me?"

"I think I shall certainly be able to do so. And now comes a practical point. Supposing I find the young lady, and supposing I rescue her from the hands of her guardians, could you arrange a very quick marriage? Have you the necessary documents?"

"I have indeed! All my papers are in perfect order. The fact that the Argentine Minister happens to be related to me will make an immediate marriage easy of accomplishment."

To himself Popeau was saying: "The first thing is to discover whether the people who are staying here are in very truth those we are now seeking? Once we have ascertained that, we shall be in a position to go ahead."

He got up. "You must be patient," he said kindly. "I think, nay, I feel sure, that I can give you hope. For the present regard yourself as my guest; the hotel is very full, but I have little doubt that I can find you some kind of room. Over there, you will find a selection of English novels. Sit down in this chair by the fire, and tell yourself that your troubles are almost certainly at an end."

The young man's eyes filled with tears. He was beginning, "How can I thank you ——" when the older man exclaimed, "I think there is no time to lose. We do not wish to find our little bird flown—even though, once on her track, we could bring her back."

Hercules Popeau felt more excited, even exhilarated, than he had felt for a very long time. He was a sentimentalist, easily moved by any tale of young love. Still, he looked very stern, as a few moments later he approached the kind of glass cage where

Madame Bonnefon sat enthroned in the hall.

"There is a gentleman waiting to see you," she said nervously.

Popeau walked over to the doctor who had been sent him from the *Sureté*.

"You are to come upstairs, and stay in the corridor, waiting for me to call you, while I go into a certain room. I cannot tell you how long you will have to wait. But I feel fairly sure that at a given moment I shall call out to you to join me. You will then have to interrogate, either in Spanish or English, a young woman. Listen to what she has to say, and make up your mind whether she has been, as I believe, kept under the influence of strong drugs for a long time. The question you will have to decide is as to whether she will require something like a prolonged rest before she can be described as having a sane mind in a sane body? It is immensely to this young lady's interest that she should be sufficiently well to go through a marriage ceremony, that is, of course, supposing she herself desires to be the bride in such a ceremony. I trust to your good sense and good heart quite as much as to your medical knowledge, to discover whether in your opinion she can safely do this. If you decide in the affirmative, you are to take her and lead her along the passage outside her bedroom, till you come opposite Number 9, that is my sitting-room. I will follow you there in a few moments. Have I made myself clear?"

The young man repeated quickly all that was expected of him just as a child spells a lesson by rote.

"Yes," said Popeau delightedly, "you have got it exactly! If you carry through this rather difficult little business I shall commend you very highly to your chief."

He went back to the glass cage. "I must request you," he said coldly to Madame Bonnefon, "to ask all the clients of this hotel to produce their passports. This is an order from the Préfecture of Police."

He saw a look of fear and surprise flash into her sallow face.

"You have nothing to be frightened about. This order is in no sense a reflection on this hotel."

"I felt uneasy when I saw the two gentlemen from the *Sureté*," she muttered in an anxious tone.

"The matter is urgent, and I myself will accompany you round."

"I suppose I may wait till my husband comes back?"

"There is no time to lose."

She looked uneasy, undecided.

"Come, come! Have I not just said that I will help you?" And Popeau looked at her fixedly.

"I shall be very glad of your help," she said humbly.

"If you have no one to take your place down here, in the hall, I will go round for you and collect the passports."

She answered submissively enough, "You are very kind, Monsieur Popeau, and I avail myself of your good offer."

Turning on his heel, he went quickly up to the first floor again. And then, full of excitement and even suspense, he knocked sharply twice at the door behind which was the girl he had seen lying back in the arm-chair, looking as if she had been heavily drugged.

He waited, but there came no answer.

Again he knocked; again he waited. Then: "Open in the name of the law!" he called out in a harsh stentorian tone.

There came a quick scurrying of feet, and the key was turned in the lock. The door was flung open, and there stood before him a small, nervous-looking man. "What does this mean?" the man gasped affrightedly.

"It means, monsieur, that I require your passport and those of your family. I am attached to the Passport Department of the Préfecture of Police."

Hercules Popeau walked boldly through into the room. It was empty.

"Will you sit down?" said the other nervously. "I keep our passports in my own apartment."

He went off into the next room, and Hercules Popeau followed him. Then it was as if his heart stopped, for instead of seeing the elderly woman and the girl he had felt sure would be there, this room also was empty.

The man came towards him with two passports in his hand. Popeau quickly opened them out. Yes, this was the name—Varia—of the people he was seeking.

"Where is the third passport?" asked Popeau sharply.

"The third passport?" The man looked at him with an air of surprise.

"I understand you have a daughter. This is the passport of your wife, and this is your passport"—he held them out. "Where is that of your daughter?"

"I did not know you wanted hers as well."

"Did you not hear what I said?" He looked hard at the man, and it was as if Varia crumpled up. Going across to a table drawer, he took something out of it, and brought it to his unwelcome visitor.

It needed but a glance for Hercules Popeau to see that whereas the other two passports were genuine, that of "Pepita Varia" had been, if not forged, altered and doctored. The holder was described as the daughter of Antonio and Maria Varia. Her age was put down as seventeen.

"Have Madame and your daughter gone out?"

The man looked relieved at being able to tell the truth. "They have gone to the Bon Marché. We are leaving our daughter in Paris with friends; there were certain things she required."

Hercules Popeau's quick ear heard the door of the other room being opened and shut.

He felt inexpressibly relieved. "I think I hear Madame and Mademoiselle?" he observed.

"May I ask you to go into the corridor or from this room?" and the old man went quickly to the door and unlocked it.

"No," said Popeau deliberately, "I'm afraid I must ask you to allow me to see Madame and Mademoiselle. It is not enough to have seen their passports. I am supposed to verify in each case the holder."

To that the old man made no answer; he went quickly into the next room and said something in Spanish.

The woman answered, also in Spanish, "I see no necessity for that!"

Her husband said urgently, "It is necessary—though a mere formality."

And then there came through the door first the older woman, and then the girl.

"Have I the pleasure of addressing Madame Varia?" asked the Frenchman.

She shook her head, and smiled. "I don't understand French," she said in Spanish.

Then he looked fixedly at the girl. It was quite clear to him that the influence of some strong drug was still present, for she looked stupid and apathetic.

"Mademoiselle Pepita Varia?" he inquired in a business-like tone.

The girl stared at him dumbly.

"She does not know French," said the old man.

"Perhaps she knows English?" said Popeau. "Now then, am I addressing Miss Varia——?"

"It was as if the girl were galvanifed into life. "No, no," she muttered, "that is not my name."

Popeau turned sharply on the old man. "I understood this lady was your daughter?"

"She is my daughter."

"Yet she says this is not her name?"

The woman, forgetting that she had said she did not know French, intervened quickly, "She is my husband's step-daughter, monsieur—my daughter by a first marriage."

"I see," said Popeau. "I presume, sir, that you have adopted the young lady, for I notice that your name is on her passport. Now that is a serious matter, from the point of view of the French Police. Pardon me, one moment——"

He went quickly through into the woman's bedroom and opened the door into the corridor.

"Come in here," he called out sharply, and the doctor who had been waiting outside walked through into the room.

Popeau went back into the other room and took hold of the girl's arm. Then, pushing her through to where the doctor was waiting, he shut the door between the two rooms.

The husband and wife looked at him, unmistakable terror in both their faces.

At last, for Popeau had remained quite silent, well aware that his silence was more sinister than any speech would have been, the old man said in a quavering voice, "What does all this mean?"

"I am not bound to answer your question," said Popeau coldly. "Yet I will go so far as to tell you that this young lady's passport bears every mark of being an irregular document. A medical man, attached to the Paris police, is now examining her with regard to the matter."

Then the woman took a hand: "I beg you, monsieur, to allow me to join my daughter. To tell the truth, she is——"

"What?" asked Popeau quickly.

"Insane, alas! We came to Europe in the hope that she would receive far more skilful medical attention here than was possible in our own country."

"I have been instructed by our secret service to make inquiries with regard to a certain Pepita Exuvoro."

The woman gave a stifled cry. She turned this way and that, as if seeking a mode of escape.

Hercules Popeau walked across to the door, and put the key in his pocket. Then

he came back to where the husband and wife stood together looking what they were, a pair of frightened criminals.

"The best thing you can do is to stay quietly here," he said slowly. "It is impossible for me to make you any promises, but I think I may say that if you do exactly what I tell you, you may escape the consequences of your infamous plot."

He turned on his heel, walked through the communicating door, locked it also, and put the key in his pocket.

The young doctor had the girl's hand in his; he was feeling her pulse, and gazing into her face, now suffused with colour. Tears were rolling down her cheeks.

"Well?" asked Hercules Popeau anxiously.

"She has been telling me an amazing, incredible tale. If it is all true, the guillotine would be too good for the wretches who have reduced her to this condition."

"Is she fit to go through the ceremony of marriage?"

"She ought to have a rest cure," answered the young man deliberately, "but I cannot say that she is not in a fit state to be married, if she herself is willing to take the risk."

"Then I feel inclined to allow her to take the risk. I thank you most heartily for your collaboration in this work of—well I can only call it—mercy and justice."

The doctor turned round to the girl. "I wish you all happiness," he said impulsively.

As Popeau led her out of the room into the corridor, he muttered, "Do you remember calling out in English last night that you were in danger?"

She looked at him. "Yes, I do remember. I had not drunk the stuff yesterday. Madame Varia was ill, and she had left it to *him* to give it to me. He was careless, and did not see me throw it away. Oh, I was in agony last night!" A dreadful look came over her face.

He said quickly: "You must forget everything that is past. Think only of the happy future."

He opened the door of his sitting-room and pushed her gently in. She gave a cry when she saw who it was that was standing there, and had not her lover rushed forward and caught her, she would have fallen.

"And now," said Hercules Popeau, "as it is too late for you to be married to-day, you will have to wait till to-morrow. Is your cousin, the diplomat, married? Can we take your fiancée there now, at once?"

"They are both longing to see her!"

"Then after I have put this young lady in the care of your cousin's wife, my task will be ended. I am going to telephone for a car. I am also going downstairs to borrow a fur coat and hat from Madame Bonnefon."

A few moments later he was back with a big fur coat and Madame Bonnefon's best hat. Then he waited a moment, looking at the girl he had saved from a terrible fate. She still looked wan, and even a little dazed.

Meanwhile, the young man was trying to express his gratitude. "Pepita? Thank your preserver!" he cried at last.

Timidly she came forward, and the big Frenchman, putting his arms round her, kissed her on each cheek. "May the good God bless you, my child," he said. "The best way you can prove your gratitude to me is to blot out from your mind everything that has happened in the Hotel Paragon. Only remember the happy fact that——"

"What?" she asked, with more animation than she had yet shown.

"—— 'Journeys end in lovers' meetings.'"

I SPEAK YOUR NAME.

I SPEAK your name, and to my heart
A little tide of love flows in,
Its eddying waves the dry sands win,
Its barren dust and drought depart.

I speak your name, and softly falls
A hush upon the list'ning air,
And day grows suddenly more fair
As if afar a blackbird calls.

I speak your name, and Beauty lays
Upon my dream her gentle hand,
Beside life's dying fire you stand
And rake the ashes to a blaze.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.

KLEPTOMANIA

By KATHLYN RHODES

ILLUSTRATED BY S. BRIAULT

MISS ALISON JAYNE walked briskly along Oxford Street on a bright October morning, feeling at peace with herself and all the world. It was an ideal autumn day, sunny and yet sharp, with an invigorating nip in the air which seemed to whisper of crisp golden leaves fluttering down in sunlit country lanes, of yellow bracken in the woods and ripe red haws in the hedges, of the scent of wood-smoke rising in cottage gardens, where chrysanthemums bloomed bravely in clumps of russet and bronze, and fruit hung in ripe clusters on the trees.

Miss Jayne herself was in keeping with the brisk autumn atmosphere. Two years ago she had been a colourless spinster of thirty-seven, living in a drab country house, tending a querulous invalid mother, and watching her youth slip by with few to mark and regret its passing.

Then had come her mother's death; and with it, or rather after the effect of it had worn off, a recrudescence, a veritable resurrection to the bereaved daughter, who for the first time in her life found herself able to follow her own way unchecked by the pull of duty, of affection or obligation. Within six months Miss Jayne had sold the house, had transported herself, her goods and one cherished maid to a charming flat in Kensington; and there, when once she had established contact, so to speak, with the world, she found herself able to expand, to breathe freely, to enjoy the feast of music and drama and art which London spreads so richly for those within her gates.

She had many friends in London—friends from whom she had been cut off during the last lean years; and they welcomed her kindly enough, though exclaiming in horror at her old-fashioned appearance in her country-made clothes. Acting on the advice of one of them, a woman a year or two younger than herself, she sacrificed her mass of chestnut hair, of which she had been secretly proud; and by so doing revealed a charmingly shaped head and a natural wave which was the envy of her companions. Next she shortened her skirts; and though she never adopted the abbreviated style which shows the knees she displayed a fair amount of silk stocking, and thereby advertised the possession of slim ankles and pretty feet. That she not only looked but felt ten years younger was one of those strange psychological facts of which we hear so much to-day; and with it all she kept her limpidity of soul, her candid dignity, and a touch of something refreshingly old-fashioned which did not debar her from taking a keen interest in the life of the day.

This morning, as she shopped, she was delightfully dressed, in a well-cut house-frock of Venetian red, and a fur coat which wrapped her slim figure cosily without giving it bulk. A small red hat was pulled over her trimly shingled head, and her shoes and stockings were of a pleasing beige shade which matched her irreproachable gloves. Over her arm hung a dark red leather shopping bag, appliquéd in diamonds of lighter shades, a bag rather larger than fashion dictated, but dear to her heart as the present of a friend; and in the bag lurked a pleasantly plump purse, some of whose contents were, presently, to be disbursed in exchange for gifts for the forthcoming Christmas season.

Thus, well dressed, comfortably equipped with the sinews of war, and with a heart full of kindly thoughts, Miss Alison Jayne proceeded on her way, unaware that she was about to encounter the most humiliating moment of her blameless life.

The big Store to which she directed her steps was humming with business as she entered. Up and down the long aisles customers passed and repassed, laughing, chattering, all, or so it seemed, in holiday mood on this gay autumn morning. Even the saleswomen had caught something of the general atmosphere of good-humour, and

sold their goods briskly and with ardour. Miss Jayne bought in rapid succession a "chubby" umbrella, an attractive georgette jumper, some fine silk stockings, and a buttonhole of very real-looking red berries, which an obliging assistant pinned on to the lapel of her fur coat. Then, glancing at her wrist-watch, she decided to buy some gloves, and finish a satisfactory morning with lunch at the big restaurant upstairs. Having come to this decision, she walked along to the glove counter, mentally deciding just what she meant to buy.

On the following Sunday she was motoring into the country with some old friends—old friends newly met again; and if Alison's fresh colour deepened a little at the thought of that recaptured friendship, there was no one to see, no one to smile or look pityingly at the woman whose youth had suddenly welled up in the heart which had remained faithful to a long-gone romance. Robert Horton, the big, breezy traveller, lately returned from the Colonies, would be the last person to catch a glimpse of that virgin heart; and Alison assured herself that there was no fear of her allowing any hint of sentiment or kindred folly to creep in and spoil so sane, so suitable, a friendship.

It would probably be cold motoring—she called on her common sense when thinking of the proposed expedition—and she had no really thick gloves to wear. A nice pair of fur-lined gloves—even fur gauntlets if the price were not excessive—yes, that would be the best; and with her mind made up she went boldly to the glove counter to state her requirements.

It happened that the glove department was in somewhat of a turmoil. Some of the assistants were away, it seemed, through illness or other cause, and the few who were in charge were in great demand; so that Miss Jayne was obliged to wait for some moments before being served. She did not really mind—it was early yet; and she stood at the counter patiently enough. Near by were some young girls, cheaply, though rather flashily, dressed, who were fingering the fur gloves without, apparently, the means or desire to buy; and one of them, a pretty, delicate-looking little creature, inserted a small hand in one particularly attractive grey fur glove and waggled her slim fingers about to the amusement of her companions. A rather haughty-looking assistant coming to serve Miss Jayne, the girl hastily withdrew her hand and began turning over some cheap gloves in another box; and Alison gave herself up to the business in hand.

The fur gloves were all rather highly priced, and Alison tried and relinquished two or three pairs as too expensive for her purpose. The grey fur gloves which the girls had been fingering attracted her hugely, but they were priced at three guineas, and although the most generous of people with regard to friends, Alison's own expenditure was conducted on a modest scale. After some hesitation, therefore, she replaced them on the counter with a sigh and bought instead a pair of thick doeskin gloves at half a guinea. As she took her parcel from the girl, her fur sleeve caught the edge of the counter and some of the piled-up gloves slipped to the floor, but she stooped and replaced them with a smile, and then put her own purchase into her red leather shopping bag. As she waited for her change she noticed, idly, that the red light which burned at the end of the long aisle flickered suddenly as though about to go out; and remembered how her maid had come to her one day, open-mouthed, with a tale of how when a big store suspected anyone of theft, the light gave warning to the shop detective to look out for the thief.

"I wonder if Mary was right," said Miss Alison to herself with a half-smile. "More probably the light requires attention—though really in a crowd like this anything might be stolen quite easily."

Receiving her change, she turned aside and made her way through the throng towards the lift, intending to go upstairs to lunch without further delay. As she neared the lift she felt a very light touch on her arm, and turning, found herself face to face with a tall young man in a dark suit, with whom she was totally unfamiliar.

"Excuse me, madam." His voice was low. "May I trouble you to step this way for an instant?"

"To . . . ?" She stared at him, surprised.

"Yes. Only just for a moment, madam." His voice was rather insistent, and she felt a vague uneasiness, which was reflected in her candid face.

"But I am just going to lunch." The request, for some unknown reason, worried her a little.

"Quite so, madam. But if you will grant me the favour of a moment . . ." As he spoke he was moving to one side;

and she perforce followed him, uncomfortably aware that one or two people were listening to the colloquy.

"Well?" Suddenly Miss Jayne felt annoyed at this persistence, and her voice was rather sharp. "What do you want? Really I haven't much time to spare, and I don't know what you can have to say to me."

"Well, madam——" For a moment the young man seemed rather at a loss. "The —er—one of the managers would like a word with you, if you will be so good as to accompany me to his office. . . ."

For one wild, whirling moment the shop and all its contents danced before Miss Jayne's eyes. Wasn't that what people said when they suspected you of being a thief? But was it possible that she was being accused of—what was the term?—of shop-lifting—she, Alison Jayne, with a fur coat, and a well-filled purse in her hand, a comfortable flat in Kensington and a pleasant balance at the Bank?

Suddenly she felt the young man's touch on her arm again; but now it seemed to be supporting her—a support of which she knew herself to be in need. . . .

"You will come with me, madam? You would like to sit down, anyway, wouldn't you? And if you will come round this way, no one—er—need know anything about it."

Still feeling dazed, uncertain, with a horrible fear of fainting before her eyes, Miss Jayne allowed him to lead her down a quiet passage, through various byways, to a door marked "Mr. Robinson, Manager," upon which her guide gave a short knock, and a moment later she found herself in a small well-furnished office, where two or three morning-coated men of varying ages were apparently waiting for her to appear.

As she entered the office one of the men came forward, a somewhat embarrassed expression on his face.

"I am sorry to trouble you, madam——" He coughed slightly as he spoke. "But may I ask if you have been making some purchases at the glove counter this morning?"

"Yes." Miss Alison had pulled herself together and she spoke quietly. "I bought some doeskin gloves at half a guinea. Though"—she was determined not to show alarm—"I fail to see what that fact has to do with you."

"That—er—was all you bought at that particular counter, madam?" He coughed again as he spoke.

"Yes. Do you wish to see the bill?" She lifted her head proudly.

"Thank you, madam." He bowed politely. "It would be—er—more satisfactory, if you have no objection."

With cold fingers Miss Jayne opened the purse she held in her hand and extricated various flimsy bits of paper, the receipted bills for the goods she had bought, umbrella, jumper, berries, and—finally—gloves.

"Thank you, madam." The man took the slip of paper. "You have the gloves in a parcel?"

"Yes." She plunged her hand into the red-leather shopping bag and pulled out the top parcel. "There are the gloves if you wish to see them."

"You did not buy any fur gloves, madam?" Now his eyes were suddenly keen.

"No." She looked at him squarely. "I wished to buy some, but they were too expensive for my purpose."

"I see." There was a brief silence, during which Miss Jayne's heart began to beat uncomfortably fast. There was something ominous in the expression on the men's faces, and as she looked from one to the other Miss Jayne had a queer fluttering sensation in her breast, as though she were caught, somehow, in a trap.

"Would you have any objection to showing us the contents of your bag, madam?" The question was suave; but Miss Jayne's spirit was roused suddenly to revolt, and she spoke quickly.

"I should certainly object, strongly," she said. "I can see no reason for the request. And I must decline to remain here any longer."

"One moment, madam." Though his manner was still suave, the Manager's eyes were hard. "As you wish it, I will tell you the reason of this request. We received information a short while ago"—suddenly the flickering red light occurred to Miss Jayne's horrified mind—"that a valuable pair of grey fur gloves had been—er —abstracted from the glove counter, and the assistant in charge informed Mr. Jackson"—he indicated the young man in the dark suit—"that a lady whose description coincides with yours had been—er —seen to place them in her bag."

"It is not true." Her voice was hoarse, and she cleared her throat impatiently. "I looked at the gloves, but I put them

back, and they are certainly not in my bag."



"No, madam? Then may I ask if these belong to you?" With a quick movement the young man who had conducted her to the office plunged his hand into her red leather bag and pulled out a pair of grey fur gloves —the identical pair which Miss Jayne had desired but had relinquished as too expensive for her own adornment.



"'But . . .' Miss Jayne felt herself sunk in a morass of horror. 'I did not buy them, and I certainly never put them in my bag.'"

"'No? Then can you explain how they got there?'"

"But . . ." Miss Jayne felt herself sunk in a morass of horror. "I did not buy them, and I certainly never put them in my bag."

"No? Then can you explain how they got there?"

She realised, with a throbbing heart, that he did not believe her, and she wondered, wildly, how she could convince him, and the rest of the men, that she knew nothing of the matter.

"No. I can't explain. All I know is that I never put them there. Someone else must have done so, by mistake."

"Madam is alone? No—er—friends with her?"

"No." Her throat was dry. "I am alone, and I did not take those gloves."

"Well, madam"—suddenly the Manager's voice was brisk—"I am afraid we must ask you to give us your name and address, and then if you will be so good as to accompany our representative——"

"You mean—you are going to—to arrest me?" Suddenly Miss Jayne's self-control left her, and she looked round her rather wildly. "You are taking me to prison? But you can't—I have done nothing. Why should I steal when I have money enough to buy what I want?"

"Not prison, madam. No. Only a few official inquiries." The Manager's voice had regained its suavity; but, looking round suddenly at a little stir of movement behind her, Miss Jayne saw a rather flustered-looking girl—the assistant from the glove counter—entering the office.

Somehow the sight of the girl brought a ray of comfort to Miss Jayne's heart, and she started forward quite eagerly.

"You sold me my gloves, didn't you? Well, you must have seen me put the others down." Her voice shook a little. "You know quite well I never touched them again—why don't you say so?"

"I saw you put them down—but—they fell on the floor—you brushed a lot off with your sleeve—and you picked them up, and then you put them in your bag—the fur ones, I mean." The girl turned to the Manager, and it was evident she was reluctant to speak. "I saw the lady stoop down, sir, and put something in her bag——"

"They were my own gloves. I replaced the others——"

"And the next second I missed the fur gloves—and I saw a bit of fur in the lady's bag, and I gave the signal to——"

"Yes, yes, that will do." The Manager cut short further revelations of the Store's secrets. "You are sure, Miss Brady, that this is the same lady?"

Miss Brady, staring with shallow blue eyes, was sure this was the lady, and was dismissed from the presence with a caution to keep her mouth shut and not get talking; and the Manager turned again to Alison, who by this time felt that she was moving in some dreadful nightmare. It could not, surely, be true that she, Alison Jayne, was accused of being a thief, a shoplifter—of stealing a pair of fur gloves which she would cheerfully have bought for any one of her friends had they needed them. . . .

The thing was monstrous—absurd. Yet it seemed as though it were really happening.

After that things became still more unreal and dream-like. Somehow she found herself in a taxi, in company with several men, a constable, who had sprung up from somewhere unseen, on the box beside the driver. Later still she was in a strangely official room where they asked questions about bail and her own recognisances and other queer subjects. Finally, having signed a document which in some odd way committed her to appearing somewhere at some future date on pain of incurring some penalty whose nature she did not understand, should she fail to keep the appointment, she was allowed to go; and after a second taxi-ride which partook of the strange, dream-like unreality of the past hour, she reached the flat from which she had so joyfully set forth on that bright and happy autumn morning.

She could eat nothing, could not rest. Fortunately, or so it seemed to her, it was Mary's evening out; and when the maid had carried away the tea-tray and left the flat, Miss Jayne sat huddled on her cosy Chesterfield and gave full rein to her misery.

Within the next forty-eight hours she was called upon to appear in a police-court to answer a charge of stealing; and since it appeared that no one would believe her word, she would, apparently, be judged guilty of a mean attempt at theft. Would they fine her—send her to prison? And in any case, how was she ever to look the world—her world—in the face again?

About five o'clock the electric bell of the flat buzzed violently, and after a second's hesitation Miss Jayne pulled herself together and went to the door.

She opened it slowly, wondering what fresh shock was in store for her; and found, to her mingled joy and apprehension, that it was Robert Horton who stood outside.

"Oh . . . you . . .?" She stood, staring, without attempting to let him in; and he smiled.

"Yes. It's I—mayn't I come in? Or are you busy?"

"No—yes—I mean, come in, of course." She held the door open and he entered, looking at her keenly.

"I—I'll get you some tea. Mary's out and I had mine early." Somehow she could not speak naturally; but he did not seem to notice, and spoke quickly.

"No tea, thanks. But I'll come in if I may."

When they were both seated he looked at her closely.

"Well, Miss Alison, what have you been

doing with yourself this fine day? Been out, eh?"

"Yes. I—I went shopping this morning——" She hardly knew what she was saying.

"No. No, of course not." She told herself he must have seen the uniformed constable beside the driver. "I knew you didn't see me. . . ."

There was a sudden silence. To save her



"'Oh . . . you . . .?' She stood, staring, without attempting to let him in."

"Did you? Do you know, I thought I saw you"—his tone was casual—"driving in a taxi down Oxford Street this morning. Was that so?"

She stared at him, wide-eyed.

"I was in a taxi, yes—but I didn't see you——"

life Alison could not have spoken, could not have asked the question she longed, yet did not dare, to voice; and the man was wondering whether it would be permissible to interrogate her as to the meaning of the

morning's strange sight. Finally he decided he must leave it to her to take the initiative, and made some remark on the proposed expedition for Sunday, to which she replied with what self-control she might.

For twenty minutes they sat talking perfunctorily, and all the while the same thought—or a variant of it—was in each one's mind. Robert Horton's thought was simply: "The poor little soul's in trouble. How can I get her out of it?" While Alison asked herself unhappily: "Dare I tell him the truth, ask his advice? Or will he believe I am a thief, a common shop-lifter?"

As the clock struck the half-hour Horton rose.

"Well, Miss Alison, I mustn't keep you. We'll meet on Sunday."

Suddenly she wondered, wildly, whether when Sunday came she would be a free woman or—or a prisoner in a cell. It is to be feared Alison's imagination was running away with her—but out of the horror of that imaginative picture she spoke desperately.

"Oh, Mr. Horton, I don't know if we shall meet or not! I—I'm in such terrible, terrible trouble!"

"You are?" His voice was gentle. "Well, that's too bad. Suppose you sit down and tell me all about it!"

Out, accordingly, it all came, and Horton listened in amazement to the story. When he realised that Miss Alison was pledged to appear at the police-court two days later, his eyes gleamed fiercely, and he rose to his feet purposefully.

"That, of course, is all nonsense. I'll go and see the Manager and threaten him with the consequences of such an absurd, a monstrous action!"

"But will it do any good?" Her voice faltered. "They found the gloves in my bag—someone had put them there, and of course I couldn't explain how they got inside the bag—and the girl swears she saw me put them in. Do you think if we offered to pay——"

"Oh no, that wouldn't do—it would be admitting liability." Horton had been involved in more than one motor accident and had learned wisdom thereby. "But I'll go and see them myself. I bet I can make them see reason."

With renewed hope Miss Alison agreed to this course, and Robert Horton bade her a hasty farewell and fared forth like any knight of old to break a lance in the service of his lady.

But it is wellnigh impossible to stop the cumbrous machinery of the law once it is set in motion, and Horton found, to his dismay, that Miss Jayne's case must be dealt with, no matter how unlikely the action with which she was charged. That the Manager of the store believed her guilty, it was easy to see. He coughed and shrugged his shoulders when confronted with the big and indignant traveller from the Colonies, murmured something about sudden temptations, strange impulses born in apparently normal minds, and evidently wished to appear sympathetic. But when it came to a question of dropping the charge he was adamant. There was too much of this sort of thing going on—his directors would be on to him in a minute if he ignored it—and the fact that Miss Jayne was well educated and comfortably off didn't enter into the question at all. He regretted it, but the case must proceed. There couldn't be one law for the rich and another for the poor; and the lady had been caught, so to speak—red-handed. . . .

He regretted that last expression of opinion when he saw Horton's blue eyes flash fire, but it was too late to retract and he rose hastily and intimated that the interview was at an end.

Convinced at last of the impotence of his errand, Horton returned shamefacedly to his waiting friend; and after owning up, reluctantly, to his defeat, spent the rest of the evening planning how best to help her by securing the services of a reliable solicitor—her family lawyer lived in the North, too far away to be of use—and promising her every support in his power. If Miss Alison's thoughts had not been so preoccupied with the terrible ordeal in front of her, she would have drawn comfort from his unquestioning devotion. But as it was she accepted it bleakly enough, and bade him good-bye when at last he tore himself away with an abstraction for which he made every excuse.

Luckily her ordeal was short. The presiding magistrate, who was, so he told a colleague, sick to death of these pettifogging cases, listened to the evidence with a bored air, and finally decided that the accused was guilty of an attempt at shop-lifting.

"I am glad of one thing," he observed, fixing the trembling Miss Jayne with a stern, judicial eye, "and that is that this

woman's advisers have refrained from entering a plea of ill-health, loss of memory, or any of those other foolish excuses to which a woman generally flies when accused of attempted thefts of this kind. It has been said that what is called stealing in a servant or shop-girl is designated kleptomania in the case of a person in a higher social scale. Personally I do not believe in kleptomania. I prefer to call it robbery, a mean attempt to swindle a tradesman out of his goods. I deeply regret to see a woman of education —and means—in this position; but taking into consideration her previous good character and the fact that she appears to feel her position keenly, I have decided to treat her leniently and inflict a fine of two guineas —and costs," he added sternly, as though afraid of appearing too lenient.

How she got out of the court and into the taxi hastily called for her by Robert Horton, Miss Jayne could never have told. To the last she had expected that her innocence would be triumphantly established; and the magistrate's decision came to her with the force of a thunderbolt hurled from the skies on to her defenceless head. To her shrinking mind it seemed that she was branded for life as a criminal; and Horton's questions to the solicitor as to the possibility of an appeal against the verdict fell on deaf ears so far as she was concerned.

Once back at home, she bade her friends farewell and tottered rather than walked into the flat, where Mary awaited her anxiously with a tempting lunch which she was quite unable to touch.

Only later, when after an attempt at tea she had the lamps lighted, the curtains drawn, and the fire blazing cheerily, did Miss Alison come to life again. And it was the faithful Robert Horton who succeeded in winning her from the miserable stupor in which she had passed the afternoon.

Sitting beside her on the couch, he tried to console her, his breezy manner softened to a gentleness which insensibly soothed her sore and bruised spirit.

"You know, Alison"—he did not notice he had omitted the prefix, but she did, and her heart stirred a little in its leaden misery —"no one in his senses would believe this thing of you. It's so plainly a mistake, a miscarriage of justice, and if we carry the thing to another court——"

"Oh no, no—I couldn't bear that——"

"But to clear your name—to establish your innocence of this charge——"

"No, no." She spoke gaspingly. "I couldn't go through it all again. As things are, perhaps it won't appear in many newspapers"—her voice was wistful—"and a good many people won't see it. But if it came before a higher court—it might get widely reported—talked about—and I couldn't bear it. No. It must be buried —for ever—and I must go away and try to live it down somewhere else."

"That's a good idea!" Suddenly Robert Horton's blue eyes gleamed. "And I'll tell you the very way to do that! Marry me, Alison, and come abroad with me next month! I'm going back to Canada. I find I can't settle down in England after all. I'm longing already for the prairies—the sunshine, the blue skies, the leagues of golden wheat—and I'm going back. But I don't want to go alone. I've loved you for years, Alison, but I never knew it till I came back to England and found you here, in London, all alone. And if you'll marry me, we'll be the happiest couple in all Canada!"

"Oh, Robert—how could I—now!" Aghast, it seemed, at his temerity, she gazed at him, her candid eyes wide with surprise. "If you'd asked me before all this happened—I'd have said yes only too gladly! I . . . I've always . . . liked you, Robert, but I never dreamed you could like a woman like me! You ought to marry a pretty young girl—and in any case I couldn't marry you—now. . . ."

And from this decision he could not move her, though he tried with all the eloquence at his command.

Again and again during the ensuing days he strove to win her to what he called a reasonable frame of mind, but in vain; and at last, with only a week before his boat sailed for Canada, he decided, sadly, that his hope must be relinquished, since Alison firmly refused to link what she evidently looked upon as her ruined life with his upright and honourable one.

But to Alison herself the reason for her refusal was something deeper than the natural desire to spare him any future shame on her behalf, should the story become known.

Sometimes, sitting brooding in the firelight, she felt the magistrate's cynicism sinking into her very soul, and a horrible and devastating doubt crept over her, a doubt as to whether after all she was innocent of this thing of which she had been accused. All the tales she had heard of a dual personality flashed into her memory, and she

wondered, miserably, whether she possessed a second self, a mean, dishonourable self who would stoop to petty pilfering to save a few miserable pounds or shillings.

The doubt, absurd as it was, ate into her confidence, her self-respect. If it were really so, if it could happen that she, Alison Jayne, was capable of actions so contrary to her usual code, then she was not fit to be her own mistress, not fit to consort with happier, more normal people, should dwell alone in some secluded spot where no temptations would come her way.

As the days passed she shrank farther into her shell, refused to go out, was not at home to visitors, and sat for hours brooding on the problem of dual personality, until she was almost ready to believe it had indeed been she who had stolen those fur gloves. And to a woman of her candid, upright character such doubts, though absurd and far-fetched, were terrible.

Three days before Robert Horton was to sail, leaving behind him the woman whose true and undying love he had won, the postman brought Miss Jayne a letter whose insignificant, not to say common, outward appearance belied the importance of its contents.

With a fastidious shrinking from the thin and dirty envelope, Miss Jayne lifted the insufficiently gummed flap and took out the solitary sheet it possessed, covered as it was with a scrawl in an unknown and illiterate handwriting.

But as she read her heart began to beat thickly, her eyes to shine. For this was the amazing tale the letter told.

" DERE MISS,—

" Since I red a piece in the paper saying you'd bin fined for pinchin those Gloves I've been right-down unhappy Becos it was Me that put them in your Bag meanin to take them meself. But when I saw the young Woman had missed them I dursent keep them and popped them into Your bag when you stooped down to pick something up Dere Miss I don't know what to say I'm bein married on Friday and sailin to Canada with my Boy and if he knew I don't suppose he'd want to Marry me and it was the first time I ever done it an I wanted to sell the Gloves to buy some cloze for Canada And when I done it and I saw the shop people thought it was you I dursent stop and I thought if it was me they'd say it was stealing and send me to prison but when they knew You was rich and a Lady they'd call it Kleptomanyer and let you off light. But I don't feel as I can go to Canada without telling you it was Me and if you will only wait I will send you those 2 Pounds if I starve first if only you won't have me put in prison so that I can get married to my Boy. Dere Miss I am so very grieved and sorry and do hope you will be able to Forgive me.

" Yours respectfully,

" MISS LIZZIE WELLS.

" P.S.—Do you remember Me I was standing next to you at the Glove Counter and I put me hand into one of them Gloves."

It was certainly a kindly Fate which impelled Robert Horton to pay a farewell call on Miss Alison Jayne at that particular moment on a bleak December afternoon.

Hearing the bell, Mary went sadly along the little corridor, wondering how best to word her mistress' refusal to admit any callers. But she was destined to undergo a pleasant surprise, for as Robert Horton's well-known voice sounded in her ear Miss Jayne literally bounded from her seat and ran into the tiny hall.

" If that is Mr. Horton, Mary, show him in at once ! " Her tone was almost shrill with excitement ; and involuntarily Mary and the visitor stared at one another in surprise, a surprise changing quickly to relief as Horton realised that he was no longer to be shut out from his beloved's presence.

In half a dozen strides he was in the room, the door shut on the gaping Mary ; and a moment later the letter was in his hands, a tearful, smiling, altogether incoherent Alison fluttering round him as he attempted to gather its sense.

" Why, this is splendid ! " His eyes shone. " Now, there is no reason why you shouldn't marry me and go out to Canada as these other young people are doing ! "

" But—but this letter doesn't alter anything ! I mean—no one must know. . . . I can't give her away, this child ; perhaps her friend wouldn't marry her if he knew. . . ."

" Rubbish ! Of course he would ! And anyway, we can wait till they're safely married and out of England. Then I'll see the firm and explain—they won't want to bring that child back to answer the charge —a short explanation in the Press with a full apology to you—and there we are ! "

" But you're sailing to Canada——"

" Yes, but not on Friday. I've changed

my mind." He chuckled. "We'll get comfortably married and go out in a week or two. By Jove, Alison, if you knew what a fright you've given me! I really thought you meant to let me go alone!"

"So I did!" But now her candid eyes were soft and confident once more. "You see—I began to wonder whether I was really a thief, or at least a—a kleptomaniac——"

"You silly little thing!" But his voice robbed the words of offence. "I only know of *one* theft to your account—my heart—and you're welcome to that! But I want payment for it—all the same! But not in money—in kind!"

"You mean——" Her face, flushing rosily, betrayed her knowledge of his meaning, and he laughed and swept her off her feet in a gigantic embrace.

"I mean—I want *yours* in return!"

THE HUMORIST'S CALENDAR.

IT'S when the old year's on the wane,
The humorous writer starts again
To further wear his thread-bare themes.
(A modest score at most, it seems.)

The subjects of his mirth for Jan.
Are some new diary-keeping plan,
Or resolutions which we make
And thereupon proceed to break.
In February, as sure as fate,
He'll poke fun at the married state,
With stories of the crafty wife
Who wrecks her husband's married life
By telling him some falsehood that
She may get cash to buy a hat.
But Leap-Year coming once in four
Gives him an extra chance to score;
For Feb. the 29th is when
Neglected girls propose to men.
Through March he has to pen his way
On Pancakes, Hares and Quarter Day.
In April he observes the rules—
Spring cleaning, poets, April Fools.
But for his ilk the greatest day
Has always been the first of May;
For editors *en bloc* allow—
"Lawn mowers may be borrowed now."
And as the cuckoo does in June,
The humorist will change his tune—
To satisfy these wit-controllers,
Suburbia borrows garden rollers.

Throughout July and August too
He always makes one topic do:
I'm sure this statement you'll endorse—
The seaside boarding-house of course.
But when in doubt it always pays
To write on women's erring ways.
So as September's rather flat,
His wife again needs frock or hat.
It's something of a paradox
That humorists by buying frocks
Become more wealthy than before.
(I always buy mine frocks galore.)
About October, I should say,
He'll write of aunts who come to stay.
Sometimes these wretched aunts stay on
And on until November's gone.
But sometimes, if the weather's cold,
These aunts, I'm glad to say, are told
To quit because the time is ripe
For plumber, mate and frozen pipe.
December sees his troubles through,
There's only one thing left to do;
To write about the wives who buy
Their husbands an atrocious tie.

If none but these themes stir to mirth,
Dear Editor, what is this worth?—
All humorous topics of the age
Condensed to fill less than a page.

GILBERT ASHBARRY.



PRECISION.

CUSTOMER: I want a hair-cut.
NEW ASSISTANT (nervously): Yes, sir, which one?

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

A VISIT TO REMEMBER.
By Mowbray Taylor.

"WHILE I'm in the chemist's," said Sybil, "you can slip into the stores. . . ."

Sybil popped quickly into the chemist's and I, immersed in thought, slipped mechanically into the local emporium.

The door had hardly swished to when a portly person bore down upon me. Instinctively I tried to dodge him by striking off sharply to the right, but he swerved brilliantly and stopped me dead. Then, with his eyebrows, he said: "Yes?"

"Good evening!" I said defensively.

"To which department may I direct you, sir?"

"Department?" I said vacantly. "Oh, yes, of course. Department!"

I admit freely that that sounds silly. But don't you see, I hadn't the remotest idea what Sybil had sent me in for, and, after all, it was my turn to speak.

As the shopwalker's eyebrows were still curved, I realised that something had to be done about it, and quickly; so I glanced at the nearest counter for inspiration. . . . No, I could hardly ask for a pair of silk stockings. The only thing to be done was to treat the shopwalker as confidant and friend.

"Ha, ha!" I began. "Would you believe it! D'you know, I've forgotten what I want—what my wife wants, that is. She sent me in, you know—just now. To buy something," I explained simply.

The shopwalker's expression turned to one of thought, tempered with suspicion. His eyebrows remained steady but his lips were pursed.

"To buy what, sir?"

"Ah, there you have me!" I countered. "I've forgotten—clean forgotten. I know I had to get something, because that's why I'm here. But ask me *what*—and I'm stumped! Remarkable, don't you think, how little things slip one's memory?"

The shopwalker's face shifted a little, settling finally into a tiny smile of pity.

"Perhaps if we walked round, sir," he said kindly, "it might help you to recollect."

It seemed a bright way out and I was grateful. Rather a nice man, after all, I decided. The sort of man to grasp things. A friend in need.

We began with the hardware department. The shopwalker was most helpful, pointing out various articles and expounding their merits with a verve and whole-heartedness that were most interesting. The furnishing department came next. At the shopwalker's invitation I sat in three lounge chairs and was bound truthfully to admit that so far as comfort was concerned they left nothing to be desired. But I was sure it was not a Chesterfield suite that Sybil wanted.

"No," I said firmly; "at least, I don't think so. It might be, of course, but it probably isn't. Of course, Sutcliffe is bound . . ."

"We'll try the next floor, sir." An obliging man, you see, but not given to sport.

On the third floor were some rather jolly mechanical toys, some of which, at my request, the shopwalker put in motion. I don't know why, but my friend did not enter into the spirit of the thing, somehow; he seemed preoccupied, and watched the moving trains without enthusiasm. There were some of the weirdest contortionists you ever saw, too. . . .

Drawn reluctantly from the toy department, my friend ushered me into the lift



NO NEED FOR ALARM.

MOTHER: Where's Willie?
JOHN: Oh, he's quite safe, mother; he's inside the snow man!

By the time we had finished with the sports department and a complete circuit of the ground floor had been made I felt that the shopwalker and I were on distinctly friendly terms. So much so, that on our way to the next floor I suggested that it would be a grave error on the Selection Committee's part to exclude Hobbs from the Tests. . . . No, I was sure it wasn't a tin bath I wanted—or a gramophone . . . What did *he* think about it?

"Perhaps what you require is in the next department, sir," he replied.

"I meant about Hobbs," I said, wondering why some men must always talk shop.

"Ah, yes. Hobbs. D'you think it is some household utensil you require, sir?"

and huskily said to the boy in buttons: "Ground!"

By this time I felt that our footing was one of extreme intimacy. Indeed, I was about to link arms before taking a final survey of the ground floor, when Sybil walked through the door.

"What a time you've been!" she said, smiling at my friend.

"Sybil, old girl," I confessed, "I've clean forgotten what you wanted. Can't for the life of me re——"

To my surprise, Sybil took my arm affectionately.

"My dear, how lucky!" She led me unresisting to the door. "I've seen the very same thing, sixpence cheaper, across the road!"

THE INTRODUCTION.

By Richard W. Bond.

I WAS trudging hopelessly through the merciless rain when suddenly, by a miracle which happens but rarely in suburbia, a taxi appeared from nowhere and came bowling leisurely towards me. I hailed it thankfully.

Swerving neatly to the kerb the taxi pulled up. It was then that I realised I was not alone. Almost at my elbow stood a girl clad from crown to knee in very becoming green oilskins—a girl, moreover, exquisitely slender and exceedingly fair to look upon.

"I'm afraid," said the Oilskin Girl haltingly, "we both hailed together."

I lifted my hat.

"I am sure," I said gallantly, "that you hailed first."

The Oilskin Girl considered me seriously with eyes of an amazing blue.

"And I am equally certain," said she, shaking her head with decision, "that it was a dead-heat."

The taxi-driver surveyed us unemotionally, and then, washing his hands of the whole affair, stared stoically to his front.

I thought swiftly.

"On second thoughts," I said firmly, "I think that perhaps I did shout first. That being satisfactorily settled," I added quickly, "I should count it a privilege if you would permit me to give you a lift. Er—I am going to the station."

The Oilskin Girl hesitated.

"Thank you," said she at length. "It is very good of you. Will you please drop me at Moxon's, the hairdresser's? It is just beyond the station."

I handed her reverently into the taxi, and then spoke crisply to the driver.

"This," said the Oilskin Girl thoughtfully, a few moments later, "is the first time I have ever shared a taxi with a stranger." She glanced at me demurely. "But when a girl of Victorian ideas finds herself in the Georgian age, well"—she shrugged her slim shoulders daintily—"I suppose she must do as the Georgians do."

I coughed delicately.

"Perhaps it might ease the situation," I said, "if I were introduced to you. And, in the absence of the common friend who is usually in evidence on these occasions, perhaps you will permit me to present myself?"

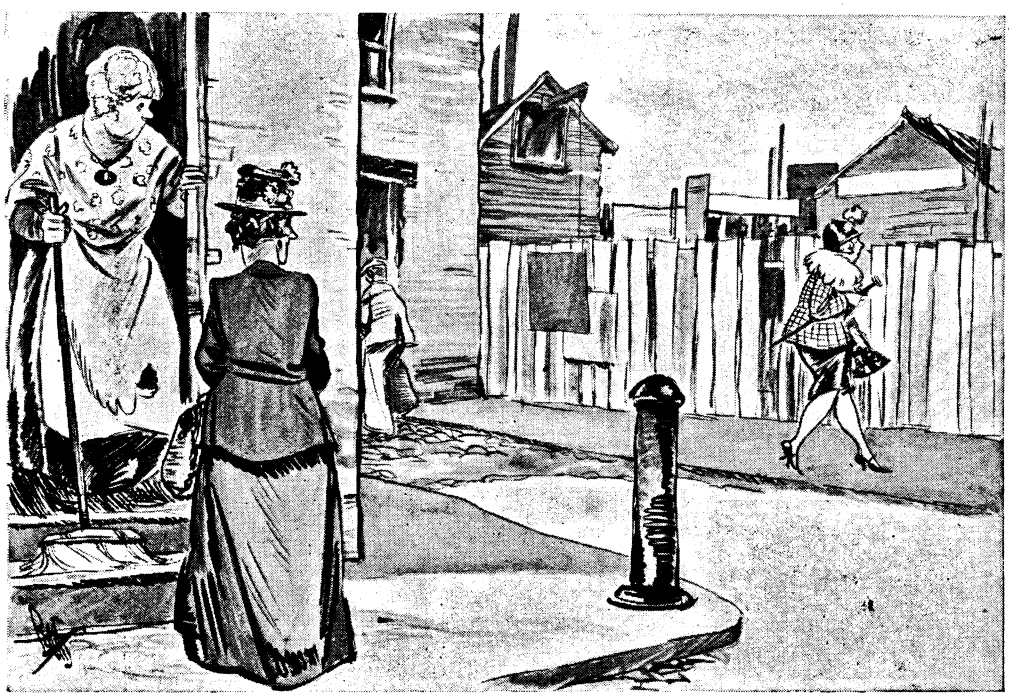
She inclined her head graciously.

"My name," I said, "is Charteris. Er—my friends," I added casually, "call me George."

"How do you do, Mr. Charteris?" said the Oilskin Girl politely. "My name is Constance Melsome. And my friends—when I approve of it—call me Connie."

"Thank you—er—Miss Melsome," I said.

There was a short silence.



DISTINCTION.

MRS. FLYNN: I see Mrs. Jooks 'as a new coat.
MRS. JUPP: H'm—new to *'er*!

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"The weather," said the Oilskin Girl, with a graceful gesture towards the window, "seems at the moment hardly a fit subject for small-talk. Perhaps you could suggest something else?"

"We might begin with dancing," I said, after a moment's reflection. "In which connection, may I ask your opinion of the Charleston?"

She considered the question.

"Well, I do it," she replied slowly, "but I don't care a lot for it. Still, one must do it, mustn't one?"

"One must," I agreed sadly.

"You like dancing?" pursued the Oilskin Girl.

"Very much," I replied earnestly. "I have been an enthusiastic novice for the past ten years or so."

"I love dancing, too," she confessed, gurgling deliciously.

I regarded her reflectively.

"How long," I asked, with studied carelessness, "ought one to be acquainted with a girl before one can with propriety seek her companionship on a dancing expedition?"

The Oilskin Girl looked at me with wide blue eyes.

"Oh, a long time," she replied virtuously. "Why do you ask?"

"I am going to the Old Burghleians' dance next week," I explained lightly. "I have a double ticket, but so far my party consists entirely of myself."

The Oilskin Girl wagged a small gloved finger at me in mock severity.

"Now, you mustn't ask me, you know," she warned. "We're not nearly sufficiently acquainted."

"Of course not," I agreed warmly. "Nothing was further from my thoughts. What I was going to say was that it is a pity the dance is not, say—er—three weeks hence. For by that time," I added meaningly, "I hope that we shall be much better acquainted."

A twinkle danced into the Oilskin Girl's eyes.

"Even then," said she demurely, "it would be impossible. You see, I have already arranged to go to the Old Burghleians' dance with another man." She paused. "A club member," she supplemented.

I started.

"Who is he?" I asked eagerly. "You see, I play for the club myself and am sure to know him."

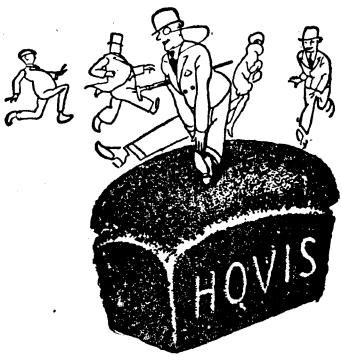
"Billy Pellew," replied the Oilskin Girl composedly. "He's my uncle."

"Old Billy!" I cried delightedly. "Why, I was at school with him. Or at least," I qualified,



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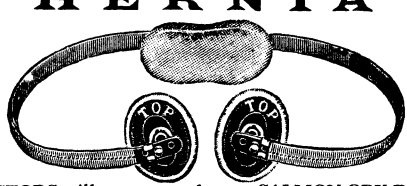
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as one who would be truthful at all costs, "I joined the year after he went up to Oxford." I paused. "Billy Pellew," I added reverently, "was the best full-back who ever played for the School."

"He *was* jolly good," she agreed. "I was so sorry when he gave up playing last winter."

"You sometimes see the Old Burghleians play, then?" I asked.

"Sometimes," she admitted.

"I play myself, you know," I said diffidently. "Er—forward."

"I know," she replied serenely. "I've seen you once or twice."

"Thanks ever so," she said gratefully, extending a small hand. "It was awfully good of you to give me a lift."

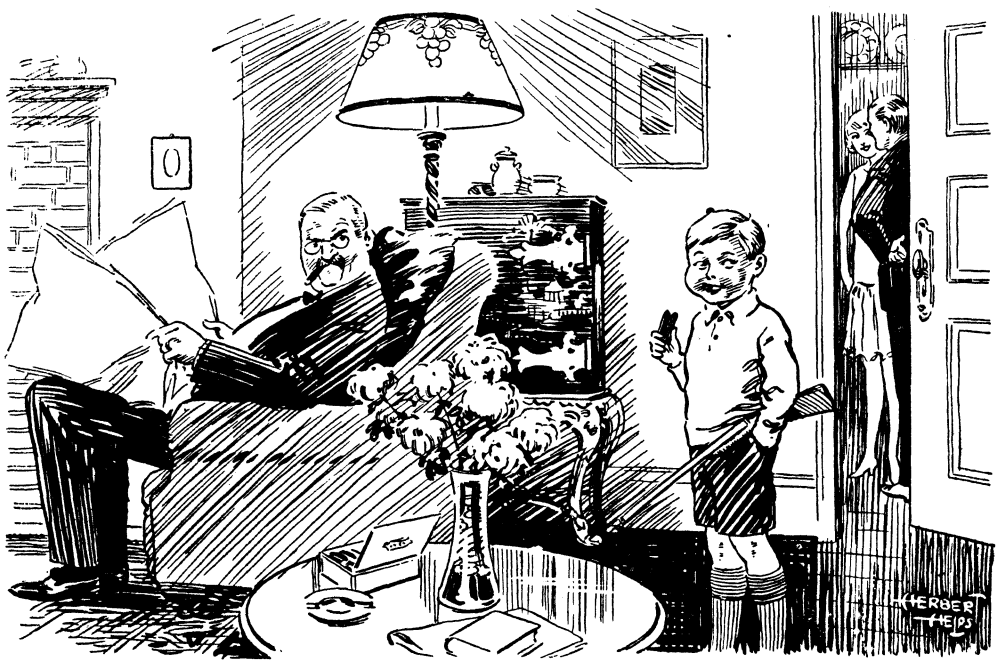
"A pleasure," I said sincerely, taking her hand. "Er—may I hope for a dance or two next week?"

"Subject to Uncle Billy's approval," she promised. "And now I must fly."

"Good-bye, Con—er—Miss Melsome," I said, shirking the fence.

The Oilskin Girl smiled at me bewitchingly.

"Good-bye," she said. Then she looked at me roguishly. "Er—George!" she added.



NEW YEAR'S EVE.

"What mischief have you been up to now? I heard your sister's voice in the hall just now saying, 'You naughty boy, don't you dare do that again.'"

"Yes, Dad, but it wasn't me she was saying it to!"

I stared at her.

"Why, then," I exclaimed delightedly, "we practically know each other!"

"Do you think so?" she asked doubtfully.

"Why, of course," I assured her.

"In that case," said the Oilskin Girl, an expression of childlike innocence in her blue eyes, "I must be quite an old friend of Paderewski's."

I was slightly dashed.

"Oh, that's different," I protested.

At this point the taxi jerked suddenly to a standstill.

"Moxon's," said the Oilskin Girl composedly, and rose to her feet.

I opened the door, stepped to the pavement, and handed her out.

And then, as I stood gaping, she turned and scurried swiftly into the hairdresser's.



THE hall was crowded to hear the eminent speaker on religion. He spoke for some minutes, when suddenly a man rose from the body of the hall and, walking up to the platform, said in a loud voice:

"The trouble with you clergy is that you believe in things you can't see. I don't. I'm a man of common sense."

"Oh, are you?" answered the speaker without hesitation. "Well, let us believe the things we can see. Put your common sense on the table and then we will believe that you have it."

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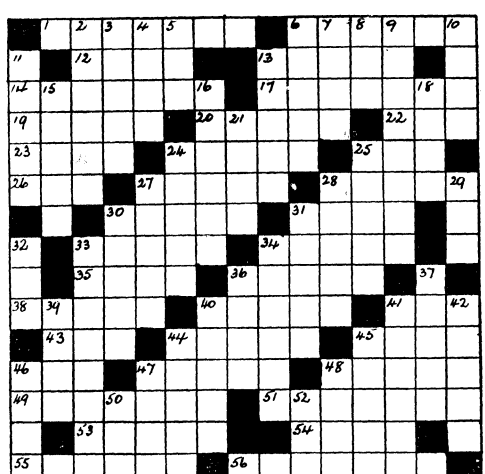
CLUES

Across

1. Landed properties. 6. Obstinate. 12. Encircles head of a saint. 13. Holds the watch at the winning post. 14. When you do this, use Wright's Powder. 17. Comes into view. 19. Rescues. 20. Cords. 22. Obtained. 23. Metric areas. 24. Sometimes clear away husband's shaving tackle. 25. Before. 26. Affirmative. 27. Bet. 28. Alloy. 30. Dickens thief trainer. 31. Give notice. 33. Made of one sort of grain. 34. Wooden Shoe. 35. Confections. 36. C.T. Inhaler will relieve Hay —. 38. Healthier in mind. 40. Desires. 41. Thieves do. 43. Religious Tract Society. 44. Truths. 45. C.T. Ointment provides this for bites and stings. 46. Silent. 47. Presiding spirits. 48. Allows the use of for a time. 49. Precious stone. 51. C.T. Shampoo will — the hair. 53. Feminine name. 54. C.T. Ointment will — the pain of cuts. 55. All inns, such as these, should provide C.T. preparations. 56. C.T. Shaving Soap does so freely and lastingly.

Down

2. C.T. Shaving Soap provides the best. 3. Subdues. 4. Mountains. 5. Likewise. 6. One generally does after washing. 7. Little demons. 8. Shelter. 9. Aromatic like C.T. Shampoo Powder. 10. Mislaid. 11. Attempt. 13. Small portable light. 15. Fleet quadrupeds. 16. Source. 18. Female deer. 21. Cooking done here. 24. Reward for work. 25. Mistake. 27. Necessary for washing. 28. Little folk who should be kept very clean. 29. Bashful. 30. Wash them with C.T. Soap to preserve complexion. 31. Found in water and in some hair. 32. Donkey. 33. Put C.T. on cuts and scratches. 34. Don't let cuts become this; use Wright's Coal Tar Ointment. 36. Meeting points of rays. 37. There are many in this puzzle. 39. Kind of lily. 40. Keep all Wright's Coal Tar Preparations, thus, convenient. 41. Competitor in a race. 42. Surround. 44. Cuts down. 45. Stop. 46. Net-work. 47. Bitter as —. 48. Wife of Jacob. 50. Portuguese money. 52. Permit.



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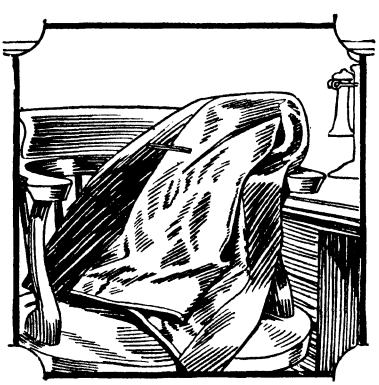
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"To bring him down was a comparatively easy task."—*See page* 283.



"A kaleidoscope of players wheeling about."

AFTERNOON OF MARCH

By H. H. BASHFORD

ILLUSTRATED BY HOWARD K. ELCOCK

HE stared at it hypnotised, high in the air, rolling over and over in the strong following wind, and already beginning to drop, like something alive, on its slow and horrible descent. And it would elude him, as everybody expected it would. At the last moment it would slip from his grasp. He knew it for certain. He could feel it already, malignly slithering from between his fingers. For the wind had changed now, carrying it unexpectedly sideways, and far above it, inconceivably lucky, he was suddenly conscious, winging away north, of a wedge-shaped flight of wild duck. Wild duck, free and winging away—God! he would have given his soul to be one of them, all that he had, or ever hoped to have, never to have heard of this accursed ground.

But there was no hope for him. He was as impregnably walled in as if he had been judged and condemned to death, with all the superior ones, like Folliott and Day, coldly examining him through their field-

glasses. He could feel them doing it, the whole forty thousand of them, ranged upon those thronged and imprisoning stands. Mulliner, Mulliner—they were carrying his name round on a blackboard—who the devil was Mulliner?

Well, they would know in a minute. They would know him for what he really was—an utter damned fool, abjectly incompetent. And he could imagine the comment or two—he wouldn't be worth more—with which they would contemptuously dismiss him. For thanks to that nod of twenty minutes ago, it was as Folliotts that he saw them all, Folliotts and Days, with their appropriate womenfolk, clear-eyed, cold-blooded and aloof-voiced, and merciless flappers of the sort that attended Rugger internationals, sisters of Blues, pink-cheeked and instructed. He could imagine his face as they would be seeing it through those glasses, his silly-looking, pale, ordinary face, and his trembling hands trying to hold the ball or foolishly missing it altogether. Or perhaps he would faint. He believed he was going to—there in that awful publicity—in the still, cold light of those eighty thousand eyes, and two of them belonging to the first gentleman in England. Yes, he was going to faint. His knees had begun to sag. The sky was growing black and there was a roar in his ears—a thin roar as if he were having gas. God! what a fool, what a *fool* he had been.

For twenty minutes ago, if he had only known it, he had been as happy as anybody had a right to be—pretty fit, decently obscure, and looking forward to an exciting match. It was true that he had been rather annoyed by Folliott's nod. It had been definitely intended, he knew, to keep him at a distance. And perhaps his own greeting had been a little too hearty for their not very intimate acquaintance. For though Folliott and Day occupied the ground-floor rooms of the house in Hampstead in which he lodged, they were both older than he, Eton and Christ Church men, though they always referred to the latter as the House. They were at the Bar, too, whereas he was only a clerk, having gone straight to the City from his school at Daybury—which hadn't even been *the* Daybury, Daybury College, since his mother hadn't been able to afford it. And though Daybury Grammar School, almost truculently, assumed itself to be a public school, it was one of those schools of which people who had been to other public schools said "Oh, really," and changed the subject.

Nevertheless he was proud of it. It had turned out some good sportsmen and contributed a scholar or two to the older universities; and he had managed, before leaving at the age of seventeen, to scramble as a forward into the first fifteen. Also, since his forbears for several generations had been poor but respectable parsons, he had been a little sensitive to the general attitude of Folliott and Day. Thus, for three years in his upstairs bed-sitting room, they had scrupulously seemed, he thought, to have paid no attention to him—a super-reticently polite couple, with the tired voices of their kind. Then one evening, being short of a fourth, they had suddenly asked him if he played bridge, and when he had innocently replied that he did, had invited him to join them downstairs.

Of course he hadn't known then how badly he played. They had never repeated the invitation. And he had subsequently deduced from a remark of his landlady's that they weren't quite sure if he were really a gentleman. And that had angered him. It had angered him more deeply than anything that had happened to him in his life before. And for fully a year he had either avoided them or acknowledged their presence with the utmost hauteur. That was why it had been a little foolish, perhaps, when he had unexpectedly met Folliott, twenty minutes ago, at Twickenham, to have shouted his name quite so genially and inquired if old Day was there as well. He hadn't of course noticed that Folliott was with some ladies, or he would have lifted his hat a trifle sooner, and he had at once realised that his method of approach had been a trifle too familiar.

But surely that was no excuse for Folliott's nod—about as Arctic as a nod could be—or the languid syllable that he had tossed to him before turning to his companions. And now they were in one of those stands, about to witness the collapse that every newspaper would be proclaiming to-morrow. For though the roar in his ears had begun to die, leaving him sweating in that icy stillness, the ground beneath his feet was already moving up and down, and he had long since lost sight of the descending ball. And it wouldn't be his fault. It was all an accident—a hellish series of grotesque accidents—beginning from the moment when Mr. Stapleton, his employer, had given him that ticket for the West Stand.



" He stared at it hypnotised, high in the air, rolling over and over in the strong following wind, and already beginning to drop."

II.

TICKET or no ticket, he would have been there, of course, because it was always the best match of the year—this match between England and Scotland—with a peculiar atmosphere of its own. But on this particular occasion it would also decide the international championship, since both of the countries had beaten their previous opponents, Ireland, Wales and France. The Scottish victories, however, had been much more convincing, and even amongst England's most ardent supporters it was generally agreed that the odds were about six to four on Scotland winning the game. For one thing her forwards, considered as a whole, were both younger and faster—a magnificent pack, well together, and of the true Scottish tornado type. Judged as a pair, too, her halves were probably superior; her right wing, Rannoch, was the fastest three-quarter playing, and her full back Donaldson, the old Oxford blue, had already joined the ranks of the classics.

If England were to win, therefore, it would chiefly be due to a somewhat greater experience—to such men as Scarsdale, her captain, affectionately known as Scarper, who had played in more internationals than anybody on record, and was still the finest forward on either side. He stood by himself, of course. England had grown unthinkable without him, with his fourteen stone of muscle and speed. But there were others, such as Rokeby, the Army scrum half, who was capable on his day of winning a match by himself; the two centres, Morton and Hayle, each of whom had been playing for England for the last three or four years; and Lenox-Jones, the fair-haired Plantagenet—the idol of the flappers—who was playing on the right wing. They were all in a sense veterans. But what they had lost in youth it was hoped that they had gained in knowledge. And they would have the advantage of playing at Twickenham with its almost unbroken tradition of victory.

So he would have gone in any case. But if he hadn't been given a ticket, he would never have entered that particular enclosure, or happened to be passing when Roger Makins had precipitately dashed from the players' entrance. Nor would he have collided with him, seen in his puckered eyes a sudden ghastly inspiration, and found himself dragged, as it were, by a dismayed undersecretary, into the perturbed council-chamber of England's rulers. For Makins was suffering from an infernal obsession that he, Mulliner, could play back, whereas he was only an averagely useful forward, though a bit faster, perhaps, than people thought. But he couldn't even kick with his left foot—never *had* been able to—and as a forward it didn't matter much; and it was only by the merest chance that, a couple of months ago, he had played back for the first time.

That was in a match between the Seldon Park second fifteen and one of the weaker London hospitals, in which the regular back had dislocated his shoulder, and he had been taken out of the scrum to fill his place. Looking upon it as a joke, he had rather enjoyed the experience. There had only been a handful of spectators. And he had found it amusing to be playing the game from a new point of view. Relying on the fact, too, that as a novice nobody could blame him for making a mess of things, he had let himself go and taken various risks that a routine back wouldn't have attempted. He had also manœuvred so as to obscure the weakness of his left foot kicking, with the consequence that he had played back for the second fifteen in the three following matches.

And then in a fatal moment Roger Makins, an old international and the doyen of the Seldon Park Club, had suggested his trial for the first fifteen in a mid-week match against Cambridge University. That had meant obtaining permission from Mr. Stapleton—a task that he had conceitedly found rather pleasant—and once again he had played the light-hearted game of a second-class forward on a holiday. But he had done what he had to do averagely well, and after that, they had played him against Richmond; and then old Makins had got it into his head that he had found in Mulliner a heaven-born back. He himself, of course, knew that he wasn't one—knew it with every fibre of his being—and had even ventured, as far as he dared, to make this clear to Makins. But Makins was the god of the Seldon Park Club, and when he had been asked to play against the Plantagenets, he had resignedly agreed, feeling a bit of an ass, but contented to know that he would soon be found out. For the Plantagenets, captained by Scarsdale, were playing about five internationals, including the rather *soigné* and superior but extremely accomplished Lenox-Jones.

"And don't forget," Makins had reminded him, "that he always swerves to the left."

So he had grinned and promised to remem-

ber, feeling like a third-form boy facing the school's fast bowler, and fatally again—though to his amusement at the time—he had brought Lenox-Jones down three times. By a bit of luck, too, he had also stopped Scarsdale, when the latter had got away with the whole field behind him, though at the price of afterwards feeling as if he had been knocked out by something between a tank and an express engine.

That had been a week ago. But it hadn't proved him a back, as nobody knew better than himself. And yet there he had been, snatched by Makins out of the careless March sunshine and abruptly confronted with what had seemed to him an entire roomful of strangers. Actually there had been three or four, perhaps—shrewd-faced men, one or two of whom he had gradually recognised, members of the Selection Committee of whom he had seen photographs either as players or in their present capacity. He had also realised, after the first few seconds, that Scarsdale was there, with his hands in his pockets, summing him up with his curiously gentle, almost shy-looking eyes. Lenox-Jones, too, had been lounging in the offing, as immaculate as ever with his crisply curled hair, with Rokeby in a corner attending to one of his bootlaces, but glancing at him dubiously over his shoulder. Then, still dazed, he had gathered that Cargrave, the back—the best of a limited choice, slow but safe—had been suddenly taken ill with some violent form of colic at what was literally the last minute. For the teams had been photographed, Cargrave included, while to add to the list of troubles, Longley and Parrott, the reserve centre and back, had just telephoned that they had met with a motor accident. This meant that they couldn't arrive for at least an hour, and the selectors had found themselves in an awkward predicament. For either they had to rearrange the team by the inclusion of one of the reserves at hand—a Cumberland forward or Sherriff, the Leicester scrum half—or search the stands for a regular back, of whom the only one in the neighbourhood was said to be Stromeyer. This they had decided to do, though with a good deal of reluctance, since Stromeyer was a moody person with whom they had already trouble, a back who had been dropped after the first trial and who might very possibly refuse to play.

And that was how it had all happened. For it was while Makins was hunting for Stromeyer that he himself had encountered him, awakened this hideous and incredible idea, and finally been trapped beyond hope of escape. Of course he could have refused. He believed that he had. But Makins had found supporters in Scarsdale and Lenox-Jones, and finally he had been snowed under with a nightmare collection of jerseys, shorts and boots. The whole thing, indeed, had become a sort of nightmare, but only until the team had begun to file up the gangway; and then, too late, and with a despairing completeness, he had realised the disaster that lay before him. But there was no turning back. The players had scattered to their places. With chattering teeth he had taken his position, and Scotland had kicked off—a huge balloon of a kick, probably a last minute plan to test him.

Presently, having exposed him and acting under instructions, it would be the sort of kick with which they would be continually plying him, grimly relying on his futility and the full-blooded speed of their forwards. Or so he had thought, but now he was going to faint—to be carried off the field before he had done anything at all. He could imagine the descriptions of it and all the headlines—the pitifullest spectacle in the records of the game. And what about Folliott, when he met him on the stairs, and the people in the office when he arrived on Monday? What about his mother and everybody at Daybury Grammar School? Oh, *God*, if he could only be dead!

III.

SOMETHING hit him on the chest, almost winding him, and instinctively he threw up his arms, and then, through the darkness that filled his eyes, he somehow remarked that he was holding the ball. So he had caught it. For what seemed a couple of hours he stood staring at it unable to move—as though from the waist down he were engulfed in some fantastic bog of inertia. But he ought to try and do something. He was conscious of a mist of faces, and especially of Lenox-Jones's on his right, tip-tilted in that high-chinned fashion of his, and apparently unaware that there was anything the matter with him. He gleaned some comfort from this. But the obvious thing to do was to try and find touch somewhere on his right—with a properly judged left-footed kick—and he couldn't do this, couldn't have done it ever. If he had been on the other side of the field, if the kick-off had been different, it would have been another matter, a natural right-foot kick. But he

wasn't there; the game hadn't gone that way; and anyway it didn't matter as he was going to faint. And then it flashed upon him that, if he did, people would think that he had perhaps strained himself. He would even be able to lie—another comforting thought—and explain that this had been the case.

And meanwhile he would run—run across the field to where he could kick with his right foot. And afterwards he could point out that it was all he could do; and nobody could say that he hadn't fielded the ball. Also he was fast—faster than people thought—he had been sprinting pretty regularly in the winter evenings, and, as he stumbled off, still a little blind, he became aware of something else. For as the darkness lightened, he saw that Morton had moved out, with the left wing, Davenant doing the same, and that they were trying to divine—proved men as they were—trying to divine and assist his plans. It came upon him that the whole team was like that—a team of a higher order than any to which he had hitherto been admitted—and that they were crediting him, at any rate for the moment, with something of their own football intelligence.

Biting upon his lip, he resolved not to faint at all, and with an odd suddenness, as if he had just come out of a tunnel, he saw the whole field, definite and detailed, with the Scottish forwards stringing towards him. But he had evidently surprised them, at least so it seemed to him, though it was quite clear that he couldn't make much ground, even if he could beat, as by a fierce spurt he did, the first of the giants immediately beating down upon him. Nevertheless that was something to have done; and then, too soon, he decided to kick—a convincing great punt destined to find touch on the opposite side of the field. But instead it was an abortion, a fatuous mis-kick, screwing away miserably to the left, with the ball about to drop, as he saw to his horror, into the very hands of John Rannoch. At least so it seemed, with the Scottish right wing covering the ground like a Brooklands racer; and if he took it in his stride, as appeared inevitable, there was nothing and nobody to prevent him scoring.

And that would be the end of him. Before the game was a minute old he would have presented Scotland with a try, and a try that would almost certainly be scored behind the posts and converted into the easiest of goals. Since he wasn't going to faint, too, he would have to face the consequences, never to be forgotten throughout the game, and probably to be followed—he could see them stretching before him—by try after try similarly given away. And then, by an amazing chance, thanks to the wind and a superhuman effort on the part of Davenant, and also to the fact that he had automatically kept on running, thereby putting Davenant on side, the English left wing got to the ball first, gathered it cleanly and shot past Rannoch; passed inside to Morton at the right moment, took a reverse pass a second or two later, and finally found touch with a clever kick inside the Scottish twenty-five.

And the crowd was cheering, not as though a mistake had been barely redeemed at the last moment, but as though it had just witnessed an exceptionally daring and deliberate series of movements. He even heard a voice, not apparently satirical, calling out, "Well played, Mulliner," and Scarsdale himself, passing him as he dropped back, punched him on the shoulder and said, "Good man." Probably he didn't mean it, except as an encouragement, and his heart was beating as if he had been a month in bed. But it was an enormous relief, even for the few seconds of the throw-out from touch and the succeeding scrum, to feel that the weight of those eyes had been lifted from him and transferred to the forwards and halves. He had been given a moment, too, in which to recover his breath, though oddly enough what he desired now beyond everything was to feel the ball again between his hands as the result of a conscious effort.

But the scrum was followed by an attempted cut-through by Rokeby, who was brought down by one of the Scottish centres, and after the next scrum the ball travelled along the Scottish three-quarter line until its left wing was forced into touch. Then from the line-out Scarsdale broke away, passing to Bill Dance, the red-headed Cornishman, who passed in his turn to Pelham-Vane, last year's Oxford captain. It seemed a promising movement, but he saw that Pelham-Vane had kicked ahead a little too far, and then he was given a lesson in what it meant to be a really first-class back. For there was Donaldson in precisely the right position, cool as a rock and deliberate as a god, finding touch with an enormous kick, judged to a yard, far down the field.

It was the kick of a master, such as he could never become. But from the throw-out that followed, perilously near the English line, he was given his next chance—it was

really the first, of course—of doing something of his own volition. For Hugh Macrimmon, one of a pair of brothers, freckled six-footers from Fettes and Cambridge, managed to break loose, was tackled by Hayle, staggered free and attempted to pass; decided that he couldn't, made another two or three yards, shook off Rokeby and then Lenox-Jones, and was left at last within less than a dozen strides of Scotland's first three points. But Macrimmon had been checked, so that to bring him down was a comparatively easy task, though it was pleasant to feel him toppling and to become suddenly aware of a new and honourable possibility. For he might get hurt, really hurt—anyway, he wasn't going to try to prevent it—and thereby escape from the arena before he had been utterly disgraced. Or of course he might—it would be a pretty low trick—but still he might, if things came to the worst, be able to fake some sort of limp that would help to mitigate his failure. His retreat in any case wasn't quite so cut off, and as he scrambled out of the scrum now beginning to form, it was with a slightly less desperate sense of imprisonment than would have seemed possible a minute ago.

For the first time too, with the game back in mid-field, thanks to a characteristic run by Rokeby, he found himself looking at it from a more or less normal and self-possessed point of view. That was an exaggeration perhaps, since his knees were still shaking, and the stands loomed as ominously as ever. But the sky was blue again, with a golden cloud pushing itself up from the south-west; there was a smell of Spring in the air, fortified and made bitter by the peculiar odour of trampled turf; and the turf itself had a pleasant feel about it, although it was already beginning to wear.

That boded ill for him, since the ball would soon be slippery. But just for the moment he was detached, seeing the game as a spectator, and with the players in front of him, especially those of the other side, beginning to be separate and recognisable persons. There were the two Macrimmons, for instance, hard as nails, with blunt, good-tempered, big-boned faces, and J. M. Waterhouse, known as Jock, a dour and remorseless Lowland farmer. There was also Cathcart, a marauding winger, with a nose like a beak and a mane of black hair that flopped over his eyes like a curtain whenever he put his head down to join the scrum. The other four forwards were men he didn't know, a lusty quartette from Edinburgh University; but McLeod and Chillingham, the two halves, were the seasoned pair of the London Scottish. Then there was Rannoch, with his raking stride, who hailed from Loretto and was still at Oxford, with Crichton and Ross in the centre, both of them Glasgow Academicals. The left wing was Leslie, also of Edinburgh University, a medical student from New Zealand, small but compact, with legs like young oaks, and reputed to be as hard to stop as anybody playing. Finally, and their captain, was George Donaldson, lean as a flail, with the face of a monk, but the finest back that had played for Scotland, or anywhere else, for a quarter of a century.

Altogether they were a formidable-looking lot, resolute, confident, and with plenty of skill; and they had the inestimable advantage, as a team, of having played unchanged throughout the season. But at least to a certain extent they had become human. They were no longer quite the impersonal unit, the sardonic machine that they had seemed just now, built by Fate for his own undoing. And that was even true, perhaps, though he daren't yet look at them, of the crowds beyond and on either side of them—that terrifying mass, with its foam-like tiers of faces, mercifully averted for a moment from his own.

But only for a moment, for here was the ball again bubbling in front of a typical Scottish rush, admirably controlled, with the white jerseys nowhere, and the field behind him grown suddenly naked. And he wasn't given a chance, not a chance, though Donaldson, he supposed, would have made one—he would have dropped back farther, or come up sooner, or otherwise defeated those triumphing forwards. But though he went down, it was only to touch the ball for a fraction of a second with the tips of his fingers, and then they had swept over him, four or five abreast, with the English line apparently at their mercy.

He picked himself up, racing foolishly after them, with Pelham-Vane and Dance at his elbows, and catching them up and passing them, Davenant and Rannoch, with McLeod shouting "Feet, Scotland, feet." And then, slanting across the field from the other side, and trying to do the job that he ought to have done himself, he saw Lenox-Jones, with that queer, woodcock stride of his—about twice as fast, really, as it looked. He saw his fair head duck and reappear and the ball sailing back again with Lenox-Jones after it, but not so fast as to prevent McLeod catching it and deliberately making

his mark. And worse was to follow. For relying upon the wind, McLeod decided to take a drop at goal—a soaring attempt; perfectly directed and only a yard or two short in length. But it was going to be short—that was clear—with the ball dropping once more towards him, a trifle more heavily, perhaps, than before, but in an even deadlier stillness. And he missed it—there in front of goal. It melted like snow from between his hands. And though he managed to recover it before it touched the ground, he had knocked it forward, and there was the whistle. Sick and swallowing, but trying to grin, he handed it to McLeod to put in the scrum, and a moment later McLeod had whipped it out again and sped it like thought to his stand-off half. And Chillingham made no error, slipping past Clarke, who was his opposite number on the English side, and drawing Morton and himself before he passed to Crichton, who side-stepped Davenant and went over the line.

And it had been his fault. There could be no other description of it. "Mistake of England's back leads to Scotland's first try"—and a couple of minutes afterwards it had become a goal, and only by a miracle not the second.

IV.

If he had had a friend in the team it would, perhaps, have been different. He could have referred to it all so much more naturally—that last moment's twist of a greasy ball, and how he wouldn't be surprised if he missed it again. And the friend might have agreed that it was jolly bad luck, but that that cross-kick of his had been a topper; and anyhow it was no good worrying, it was all in the day's work, and that this was merely a game like any other. But it wasn't such a game, and he hadn't such a friend. And though he would have liked to apologise to Scarsdale, he wasn't quite sure whether, in Scarsdale's world, this would be considered the right thing to do. For not only in the football sense, which applied to them all, most of these people lived in a larger world. They had been tempered and horizoned by processes unknown to him in regiments, ships, and universities.

And it would also have been different if Makins had been right—if he had been really a back, which he knew he wasn't—for then he might have looked forward with reasonable confidence to recovering himself and doing something good. And here were the Scottish threes again romping away, with the ball travelling left this time towards Leslie, who had taken his pass and was coming like a cannon-ball towards Lenox-Jones and himself. With his square-chinned battling face, he saw him eyeing Lenox-Jones as he came along, too far ahead now of his own insides to be able to pass before he was tackled. And if Lenox-Jones missed him—he began to feel empty again, remembering all he had heard of Leslie's unstoppableness—if Lenox-Jones missed him, it would be a duel between the two of them, himself and that pocket Hercules. And Lenox-Jones had. He had missed him clean—gone too high for him and been handed off—and here was Leslie, with the Scottish section of the crowd roaring him a frenzied invocation.

It was upon himself now that Leslie's face was bent. Was he going to kick or trust to his strength? And he somehow became aware from a gleam in his eyes that he was putting his last ounce into hurling himself through. And in that case there was no alternative. He must go for him hard, and the harder the better, since this would be a pretty good moment, now that he came to think of it, in which to be hurt, genuinely or otherwise. And then, as luck would have it, he took him so exactly right that Leslie went into touch like a shot rabbit, rolling over and over, with the roar that had accompanied him suddenly transformed into a crash of cheers. And they were for *him*, so that when he staggered to his feet, with Leslie still panting on the ground, he had entirely forgotten, in the moment's thrill, about being hurt or pretending to be.

And presently something else happened, altering even more the whole complexion of the game. For after another ten minutes or so of ding-dong play, from a scrum near the Scottish twenty-five, the ball went to Hayle, who tried to find touch with a high kick falling a little short. And Donaldson mis-fielded it, actually knocked it on—the great Donaldson—just as he had done himself; and, just as in his own case, with the result that a score followed a moment after. For Rokeby got away from the scrum that followed, went down in glory having passed to Scarsdale, and Scarsdale staggered over, draped, as it appeared, with about half the Scottish side. But he was over, and though the try wasn't converted, Scotland was now only two points ahead; and surely, in the eyes of everybody, even the reporters, Donaldson's mistake would excuse his own.

It would show that in this wind, and with the ball as it was, fielding a high kick was no easy matter, and then, as though somebody had shouted his thoughts aloud, he found himself blushing to the roots of his hair.

For what did it matter what anybody thought about him—scribblers and spectators in comfortable seats? It was the game that mattered, and what they thought about him wouldn't affect it by a pin's breadth. God! and there he had been, playing in the game of his life—already nearly half over, and with the other side leading—and wasting its golden, irrevocable moments in thinking about nothing but his beastly self. He had even been base enough—it was almost incredible—to consider slinking out of it under false pretences, and with the Scotsmen attacking again, carrying scrum after scrum, coming through or heeling as they pleased.

For there was no doubt about it, his own side was finding it pretty difficult to settle down—partly owing, perhaps, to a national characteristic, English sides being notoriously slow at starting, but chiefly to the fact that, after each of the previous matches, the team had been considerably remodelled. This had been due to injuries, to sundry weaknesses that the earlier games had revealed, and also to the selectors' policy of adapting the side to the supposed idiosyncrasies of its particular opponents. Thus three of the forwards playing this afternoon, though they were all of them old internationals, had been brought into the side for the first time this season as especially fitted to deal with Scottish tactics. But the result had been that the scrum, as a whole, was still a little ragged and ill at ease, while Clarke, the outside half, who had been abroad all the winter, wasn't quite at home yet with Rokeby's erratic genius. And the other side was making the most of it. Five minutes later, Chillingham dropped a goal, and just before the whistle went for half-time, Rannoch slipped over for another try. Luckily it was far out—the sort of try that no back could have prevented—and Donaldson's kick, from a difficult angle, just failed to convert it. But even so, as the sides crossed over, it was with Scotland leading by nine points and two of the selectors, with anxious faces, coming across the field to talk to Scarsdale.

For a moment he wondered if they had come to suggest changes, his own recall, perhaps, amongst them. And then he remembered again, fully and overwhelmingly, that this couldn't, of course, be the case. For better or worse, and though he was still an outsider—a last-minute substitute of an inferior kind—he was playing for England, he himself, till the last whistle blew and the game was over. Almost without knowing it, he had become an international, was actually and for ever one, here and now. And there in those stands, of which he had been so desperately frightened, were forty thousand less fortunate people. He took a deep breath, filled it was true with a profound satisfaction, but curiously sober and much more concerned about the redemption of those nine points.

Nevertheless this was a moment, he knew, that he would never forget—the two or three forwards standing beside him, with their scrum-caps loosened and their red, relaxed faces and the odour of sweat blowing from their bodies. Beyond them to his left, miraculously unsoiled, Lenox-Jones was laughing with Davenant, and beyond them again Scarsdale was talking to the selectors, his right arm resting on Pelham-Vane's shoulder. Another of the forwards, new like himself, a Northumberland policeman, came and spoke to him, and presently one of the selectors, returning to the stands, paused for a second or two with a smile.

"How are you feeling?" he asked. "Bit of an ordeal."

"Just a bit," he replied. But he had lost all his fear. There was only the memory of it to be laughed at and make him kinder to other people.

V.

He was playing now with his back to the South Stand clock. But he noticed that its hands were at five minutes to four, and also that the wind, which should have been helping them, had dropped to the gentlest of evening airs. But the light was good, and formidable as were the odds against which they were starting the second half, it was clear from the moment of Scarsdale's kick-off that the English forwards were seeing red. Thus from the very first scrum Dance got away with the ball at his feet and his head like an oriflamme, flanked and assisted by Scarsdale and Pelham-Vane and only pulled up by the imperturbable Donaldson. But Donaldson's kick failed to find touch; Davenant fielded and passed to Morton, who sent Rokeby away through the thick of both sides, to be finally smothered by the brothers Macrimmon.

And then for ten minutes England did everything but score. Twice in succession Rokeby beat McLeod and Chillingham, but

only, in the first case, for Hayle to knock on and, in the second, for Morton to be pushed into touch. Scarsdale and Dance, too, were each in turn held up a yard or two from the Scottish line. And once he could have sworn that Lenox-Jones had merely to go over and touch down.

But it had been a forward pass, with a consequent scrum, and then there happened one of those heart-breaking reverses of fortune that made the game, according to one's particular point of view, either the most lamentable or glorious on earth. For the ball was cleanly heeled into Rokeby's quick hands, a beautiful pass was taken by Clarke, and another one given, intended for Hayle, but by the sheerest bit of luck intercepted by Ross. It was the matter of a second. He was almost certain that Ross had scarcely realised what he had done. But he knew from the start that, if Ross kept his head, he would be powerless to prevent a score. For the raven-mopped Cathcart was following up on one side, with Leslie in position on the other, both of them unmarked, and with Leslie at any rate sufficiently fast to make the distance.

And so it happened. For though Ross decided upon Cathcart and the latter was overhauled and pulled down by Morton, the ball went to Crichton and from Crichton to Rannoch for the fastest man on the field to score at his leisure. Grim and crestfallen the English side streamed back, some of it from the far end of the field; Donaldson converted the try into a goal, and Scotland was fourteen points up. He glanced at the clock and saw, to his anguish, that it was nearly a quarter past four, with the game due to end, if there were no delays, at five-and-twenty minutes to five. Picking up the ball he threw it to Scarsdale, feeling in his heart that all was over, but learning as he did so what it meant to be the real sort of captain. For Scarsdale, without saying anything—he was the least talkative of players—had evidently and completely put the incident behind him, and was returning as contentedly to mid-field as though the game were still in its infancy And there was no gesture about it. It wasn't even a pose, though it could only have been the result, he supposed, of a long schooling, backed by the knowledge, born of experience, that no game was lost till it had been won. And it worked. From his position at back he could almost see it spreading from forward to forward, steadying and reminding them that, prior to this temporary set-back, they were definitely in the ascendant over their opponents. And as though to justify it, and in less than five minutes, to the thunderous rapture of the crowd, Lenox-Jones had flickered across the line and Morton successfully kicked a goal.

It was true that, like the Scottish score, it had been due to a bit of luck, the result in the first place of a mistimed pass. But it was sufficient to remind everybody on the field that there was still a remote chance of an English victory. A couple of tries, turned into goals, and those nine points would have been out-topped; and there was still a quarter of an hour left with two invaluable minutes more. Moreover, it had become manifest that of the two packs the English was the likelier to last to the end, or so he had thought until, for what seemed an eternity, he was being put to death by Scottish forwards. For first he had gone down to a cyclonic rush on the part of the tow-headed Edinburgh quartette. He had then been dragged for nearly ten yards hanging to Waterhouse's right foot. And later, trying to clear after a wild pass from Hayle, he had been flung to the ground by three or four Cathcarts, and once again, with the ball under his chest, he had been stumbled over and cursed by a hundred Macrimmons. And yet all the time, as he had known deep inside him, those clock hands behind had been travelling so fast that now, when he was free for a moment to look at them, he simply daren't turn his head.

Not that he had much time, for almost at once there came a towering cross-kick from Leslie, a surprise kick right across the field with the whole Scottish pack flooding after it. And there was nobody to take it, nobody on his own side, who could reach it before the bounce—except himself, of course, by so narrow a margin that it might be better not to try. But the bounce might go wrong. Nobody could tell. And a Scottish score now would decide the issue. And anyway with luck, he thought, he could just get to it. In fact he was sure of it, and so he did. But it was a good bit of work and rather amusing, though he could only stagger on into touch, while any gloating that he might have permitted himself was chased out of sight by what happened next. For Bill Dance managed to secure the ball from the full-swung throw-out by Rannoch, and fired it at Clarke, who started one of those movements that live in men's minds like the line of a poem. For feigning to pass, Clarke went on himself, completely

deceiving both Crichton and Ross, and a moment afterwards had sent the ball rippling along the whole front of the English team. From Scarsdale to Rokeby and Rokeby to Pelham-Vane, back again to Scarsdale and once more to Clarke, it had first gone left down the fringe of the herd but was now coming right again into open country. With his heart standing still—or that was what it felt like—he beheld it in the air to be taken by Hayle, and beseeching Heaven on Hayle's behalf, saw it float out to Lenox-Jones. Then there was a flash of Donaldson, like a dark meteor, but there was the ball again, dancing back—from Hayle to Morton and Morton to Rokeby, to be touched down at last between the goal-posts. It was the movement of the match, of a score of matches, and Morton again kicked the goal, with the clock at half-past four and England only four points behind.

He never heard it. For all he was conscious, the game might have been transferred to the North Pole. And it was only afterwards that he knew it had been finished to a deep and continuous roar of sound. For though the Scottish forwards had shot their bolt and Scarsdale was taking a scrum on every possible occasion, Donaldson and the threes knew what was required of them and were carrying it out with a deadly efficiency. There was no taking risks now. Solid as a wall they foiled attack after attack—nursing their forwards, whenever they had the chance, with time-devouring kicks into touch, and probably observing, with inward satisfaction, the relentless march of those clock-hands behind him.



"The fellow had got him. He was down and out, but there was the line. He was the other side of it. Nothing mattered."

Where they were now he didn't know. But the referee's eyes were already on his watch, and almost achingly he found himself trying to push it away from him—that long, last, dreadful blast of the whistle. And then on the very verge, he felt, of its being blown, Morton attempted a drop at goal—an attempt that, if it had been successful, of course, would have drawn the match, but one that went a foot or two wide of the post. And surely that had ended it. But here were the sides back at the twenty-five again and Waterhouse dropping off—a long low kick straight into the hands of Davenant, a little

in front of him and to his left. And Davenant slipped, though with the ball in his hands, rolled on his side, and half sat up, and suddenly shouting to him gave him a pass, to which he was only just able to get his hands. And then for what was probably the last time the panting forwards were on the top of him—on the top of him and over, and he had come to the surface again, with the ball still in his grasp.

"Rather funny," he thought, and staggering to his feet, he began to run down the left-side touch line, with a kaleidoscope of players wheeling about and somebody breathing hard over his left shoulder. Glancing round, he saw it was Davenant and bore to the right a little to be ready to pass, conscious at the same time that somebody had made a grab at him but apparently without result. Fainter than dawn, there touched the fringe of his mind the hint of a remote, unbelievable vision. Davenant was still, he saw, in position, with Rannoch ahead and Crichton coming across at him. But there was some space about him. He began to spurt. He wasn't quite sure, really, how fast he was. And somebody else, again without avail, gripped his elbow for a moment and then his ankle.

But Crichton was the man that he wouldn't be able to get by. Better pass to Davenant while the going was good. But where had Davenant gone? Damn it, he wasn't there. Why the hell wasn't he following up? He half paused, seeing that he had outrun him, and then to his amazement saw Crichton shoot past him, and suddenly realised that, without the least intending to, in Rugby parlance, he had sold him the dummy. That was what Clarke had done five minutes ago. But it gave him another vista of comparatively empty turf, with a new figure, the indomitable Bill Dance, beating all records on his right. The vision grew, becoming an intoxicating light. Rannoch was somewhere on the edge of the world. But there were only three people in it for practical purposes—Donaldson, Dance, and himself. He gave the ball to Dance, saw Donaldson go for him, received it back again, and saw nothing else—but a white line, and from over the edge of the world, a streak of darkness trying to snatch it from him.

But it shouldn't. No, by God, it shouldn't, not if he burst every vein in his body. And he was a yard ahead still; he was going blind; half a yard; the fellow had got him. No, he hadn't. Yes, but he had. He was down and out, but there was the line. It was underneath him. God! let him keep the ball. He was the other side of it. Nothing mattered.

VI.

Except to kick the goal, of course. And that mattered everything. It was the razor-edge between victory and defeat. And he marvelled at the quiet unconcern of Morton, with whom the awful responsibility lay. And that too, he supposed, could only have come from schooling—from the living through of a hundred preparatory moments. But from the first he saw that it was going to be all right—a beautiful, deliberate, slow-rising kick, dropping the ball so truly between the posts that the judges behind needn't have waved their flags.

For everybody on the field had seen what had happened, and it was only then that he became aware of the pent-up hurricane that had swept to its feet the whole of that vast and enveloping multitude. For a moment it took his breath away, submerging everything, the referee's whistle and the cheers of the teams, and in the next a hoarse and gesticulating mob was pouring like a cataract across the field. He saw Scarsdale beginning to run. But it was too late. He was caught up and shouldered. And before he quite knew what was taking place, the same thing had happened to himself. People he had never seen before, people with kindly faces, were shouting his name and clapping him on the back, while others, amazingly and devastatingly humble, had made themselves a chariot to carry him in. He heard himself saying to them—at least he supposed it was himself—"Don't, don't. It's all right," and trying to explain to them, as they tossed him along, by how narrow a margin it might have been otherwise.

But meanwhile it was extraordinarily pleasant, even though it didn't mean much except, perhaps, this—that to be bidden to life's feasts one must have contributed something, if only a crumb or two, and that by a fluke.

"Gad, I must be getting old," he thought. But, if he were, it wasn't such a wholly disagreeable process, of whose equable fruits, a few hours later, he was destined to taste another. For Folliott and Day, as he opened the front door, happened to be standing in the hall, and seeing him enter came and shook hands with him and invited him into their sitting-room for a glass of wine. And as though there had fallen from him some miasma of youth, he suddenly saw them as they really were—a not very successful, rather shy, and essentially decent pair of fellows.

IN EVIDENCE

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.," "The Stolen March," "Anthony Lyveden," "Valerie French," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

THE curtain finally descended upon the successful revue, and the tall, dark girl in the striking crimson coat rose to her feet. For the first time that she could remember Alathea Harwich had gone to the play alone. More. Out of a full house there was nobody present that she knew. It was plain, however, that plenty of those present knew her. As she made her way out of the theatre, surreptitious whispers and nudges declared this fact.

She did not wait for a taxi, but left the building afoot. Two minutes later she was standing within the stage-door.

As she turned to the keeper, Miss Deodore's pert maid appeared.

"Will you come this way, my lady?"

Alathea followed her to the star's dressing-room.

Her reception was effusive.

Mona Deodore embraced her warmly, and 'Tops', the pre-eminent comedian, imprisoned her hand and drew her on to a sofa with his arm close about her waist.

Alathea submitted gracefully.

Mona pointed to a well-furnished tray.

"What'll you have, darling?"

"Nothing, thanks," said Alathea. "I've —I've sworn off drink after dinner, to please *la mère*."

"Oh, you must have something," said Mona, dropping into a chair. "I've got a new toast. 'Law and Order', darling. Wait till I get in the box. You know it's fixed for Thursday?"

Alathea nodded.

"Silence!" barked 'Tops', after the manner of an usher. "Be uncovered in court. Any more for the Lido? Which reminds me, I've got a lovely gag for Thursday night. You know where Mona ——"

Here the door was opened, and the pert maid re-entered the room.

"Mr. Lemonbaum is here, madam."

"Oh, bring him in," said Mona airily.

Alathea's spirits sank. That she loathed the solicitor was nothing. What troubled her was that his arrival was not accidental. She knew that instinctively. He had been sent for on purpose to deal with her.

The fellow came in unpleasantly. This was hardly his fault. By the mere fact of being present, Mr. Lemonbaum committed an offence against whatever company he kept. It follows that his comings in were obnoxious. Only his goings out were unexceptionable. Someone in the City had said of him that he could very well pose for any three of the seven deadly sins.

"Nunc, nunc, Teddy dear," cried Mona. "How's the case?"

"Safe and sound," said the lawyer, sucking his lips. He bowed to Alathea. "I dined with Habakkuk this evening," he added deliberately. "He's very confident. And we've got an excellent Judge. He may be trusted to tell the jury that people can't flash out of a private drive——"

Alathea sat back.

"We were going fast," she said.

Miss Deodore's eyelids flickered.

"Under thirty, darling. Tops daren't drive more than thirty with me in the car."

There was a little silence. The lie demanded digestion.

At length—

"Speed's very deceptive, Lady Alathea," said the lawyer pompously. "Happily Mona had just looked at the speedometer. If you remember——"

"It's all rather—rather hazy," said Alathea. "It's nearly a year since it happened, and—and—I wish you wouldn't call me," she added jerkily.

"Needs must, sweetheart," said Mona carelessly. She raised her glass to her lips and took a deep draught. "Our gilded reputation's at stake. An' I'm not going

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to let a couple of old pot ferns put it over this rose. 'The woman has been drinking, Fanny.' You heard her say that?"

Alathea nodded.

She had heard the deliberate statement, and she had heard Miss Deodore's reply. If the latter was to be given in evidence . . .

'Tops' rose to his feet and adjusted an imaginary wig.

"I think your name," he announced, "is Ernest Topham Shoal, late organ-grinder to the First Phat Pheet and Vice-President of the Anti-Bust-Bodice and Bung-oh Society."

There was a burst of laughter, to which Alathea mechanically subscribed.

As it died down—

"You see, Lady Alathea," said the lawyer, "you are the only independent witness we have. Mr. Shoal was driving: the car was Mona's car. Again, though the action has been brought against Mr. Shoal, Mona and he have been associated for so long that it would be impossible for any jury to regard her evidence in quite the same light as yours."

"I quite see that," said Alathea. "What bothers me is that it happened so long ago. I'm to be asked about something which isn't fresh in my mind."

"Nerves, darling," said Mona. "You wait till they try to bounce you, and you'll remember all right."

"Do you mean to say, sir," said 'Tops', "that you have the effrontery to stand there and tell the Court that, as the direct result of the collision, Miss Fanny Fennel's bustle wasn't shifted two inches out of the true?"

Mona and Mr. Lemonbaum paid another tribute of mirth.

"All the same," said the lawyer comfortably, "I can appreciate Lady Alathea's, er, misgivings. It is some time since it happened. The Law's delays, you know." He produced some documents. "Happily, I have her statement here. I think if we just ran through it . . ."

"My statement?" said Alathea, frowning.

"Your statement," said the other, unfolding some typewritten sheets. "It was taken down in shorthand the morning you came to my office, nearly—nearly a year ago. When your memory was fresh, Lady Alathea. I always have a shorthand-clerk present, to avoid the possibility of mistake." He looked at Miss Deodore. "Are we likely to be disturbed? No? Well, while Lady Alathea and I go through it, I think it would be a good thing if you read through yours. And you yours, Mr. Shoal. You see, after this long interval . . ."

When, half an hour later, Alathea Harwich left the theatre, she was profoundly depressed.

It was now some eighteen months since, to the distress of her parents, she had chosen to sit at the feet of Mona Deodore. There were worse feet, certainly: but Mona, 'Tops' Shoal and their easy-going Court were of a different school to that to which the Levels belonged.

Both sides had behaved very well.

Lady Level had invited Mona to Charles Street, and Mona had made excuse. When the Levels had gone to her theatre, Mona had not 'asked them behind', but had visited them in their box when the play was done. Other such courtesies had been observed. The Levels were consistently cordial, and Mona as firmly refused to 'foul the old birds' nest. If it amuses Ally to play around on our muck-heap . . .'

It did amuse 'Ally' very much. For seven months the lady had played nowhere else.

Miss Deodore was a good sort. She was also remarkably clever, tough as you make 'em and preternaturally shrewd. She had started life in a Liverpool doss-house, and now, at thirty-five, she was earning six hundred a week. Her virtues were more apparent than her faults, for all of which I think she may be forgiven, but—rub her too hard the wrong way, and she would stick at nothing to gain revenge.

The accident at Gray's Foley had opened her *protégée's* eyes.

The big Isotta coupé was hurrying home. 'Tops', who was driving, had tried to bite Mona's ear. As he succeeded, there was a splintering crash. A Rolls had curled out of a drive, and the coupé had caught and crushed it against a neighbouring wall. By a miracle no one had been hurt, but what was left of the Rolls, which had been brand-new, was scarcely worth taking up.

Shaken by the collision, fortified by three cocktails, eager to vindicate 'Tops', Miss Deodore had stepped incontinently into the ring.

Equally shaken, enraged by the destruction of her car, thrice armed because her quarrel was just, Miss Angela Fennel had spoken—with ice in her breath.

'The woman has been drinking, Fanny.'

The observation was supererogatory and would have been unpardonable, had it not been palpably true.

The scene which followed, Alathea strove to forget.

Mona had thrown back to the doss-house in which she was born: Miss Angela Fennel had listened with something of the grim detachment of a High Court Judge: Alathea had prayed for death: 'Tops', who knew Mona, was careful to hold his peace.

Mercifully, there was no audience, and after a while Alathea and 'Tops' had contrived to get Mona away. Only they, the Misses Fennel and their chauffeur had witnessed the scene.

The burden of that hot afternoon brought forth fruit.

It shattered Alathea's illusions regarding the company she kept. It involved her in a publicity, which the day before she would have welcomed, which now she loathed. It provided continuous employment for several men engaged in the motor-car trade for several weeks. And it led to the issue of a writ against Ernest Topham Shoal, actor, and a claim for special damage of two thousand five hundred pounds.

Staring out of her taxi, Alathea recalled the publicity with her underlip caught in her teeth.

And now, nearly a year later, when her wretched excursion into the limelight was being rapidly forgotten, her lapse was to be advertised, the most lurid incident of an unfortunate association was to be actually broadcast. More. The truth would be black enough, but that was not to be her portion. A pitched battle was to be fought before the world, and she was to play her part on the wrong side—*on the wrong side.*

Truth, Decency, Justice stood by Miss Fennel's shoulder: Alathea must face the four, because, come what might, she could not let her friends down . . . *her friends.*

Remembering Mr. Lemonbaum, Alathea felt rather sick.

His attentions, his courtesies were monstrous. On the score of knowing his daughter, the man had accosted Lord Level in more than one public place. But that was nothing. To-night the fellow had shown her that he more than half suspected that she would go back on 'her friends'. Mr. Lemonbaum might be odious, but he was no fool.

Alathea felt ready to choke.

She dismissed her taxi in Bruton Street, intending to dance for an hour. Perhaps, after that, she would be able to sleep.

As she passed up the steps of a mansion, she let fall her bag. This was restored to her by a shy, fair-haired stranger who had that moment arrived. The young man was patently nervous and seemed very glad of her smile. Alathea wrote him down for a Civil Servant who would have been happier in bed.

They passed into the hall together.

* * * * *

"Excuse me, but I am your hostess. May I ask who invited you here?"

The words cut through the babel, as the cry of an owl through the clamorous croaking of frogs.

Out of thirty people within earshot, Alathea looked round to see Mrs. Dellaby Low confronting the shy young man who had picked up her bag.

The latter was crimson: his honest blue eyes were big with trouble: he looked round desperately.

"I brought him," said Alathea swiftly. "I ought to have introduced him, but you know what I am." She stepped to him quickly and laid a hand on his arm. "Mr. Welwyn—Mrs. Dellaby Low. You ought to have found me, Roger, but I suppose it's my fault. Let's finish this dance, shall we?"

Mrs. Dellaby Low's features relaxed in a smile.

"I refuse to apologize," she said. "Take it out on her, Mr. Welwyn, and put it across her for me. She's made fools of us both. I'm very glad to see you, you know. Send me a note to-morrow and I'll put you down on my list."

The young man bowed in silence.

Then he took Alathea's hand and began to dance.

When the measure was finished, she led the way to two seats on a bend of the stairs.

The young man glanced up and down. Then—

"Why did you do this?" he said.

"I don't know," said Alathea. "You didn't look like a gate-crasher, and I—I guessed there was some mistake."

"I dined to-night with some people I hardly know. We were to go on and dance. There wasn't room for me in the cars, so they told me where to meet them, and I took a cab. I expect they thought it was funny to send me to the wrong house. It—it was rather, from their point of view."

"I don't think it was funny. I think it was a rotten trick."

"You're not like them."

"How do you know?"

The young man laughed. His shyness was passing away.

"You've given me a lot to go on," he said. "My name is Lambourne—John Lambourne. I hope one day I'll be able to show you that I'm grateful for what you've done."

"You dance all right," said Alathea, "but I've never seen you about."

"I go out very little," said Lambourne. "I'm at the Bar, you see, and I work pretty hard."

"I see," said Alathea slowly. "Do—do you know Mr. Lemonbaum?"

The other raised his eyebrows.

"I know of him. Most people do. He—he doesn't employ me."

Alathea nodded.

"He wouldn't," she said. "Never mind. I think you should go out sometimes. If you did, you wouldn't be had, as you were to-night."

"I'd go every night if I knew you were going to be there."

Alathea smiled.

"I'm not always so nice," she said. "Still, if you want to love me, I'll play you up. Try 66 Charles Street on Monday at half-past ten. It's a very small dance. Lady Level, my mother, 's your hostess, and—an' I bet you don't come."

The man started violently.

"Lady Level," he said. "Then you're Alathea Harwich. You're . . ."

The girl looked at him keenly.

"That's right, Mr. Lambourne," she said. "What do you know?"

Lambourne put a hand to his head.

"I'm against you," he said. "Against you. *Fennel* v. *Shoal*. I've the junior brief against you on Thursday. And I'm to cross-examine you. My leader will take the others, but I'm to attend to you."

Alathea rose to her feet.

"So you know," she said quietly. "You've had an advance copy of my, er, outlook. Well, now you see. I told you you wouldn't come."

The man had gone very white.

"I shall come," he said quickly. "I mustn't say anything else, because I'm the other side. I shall come to your home in the hope that—that you'll play me up. But I don't think that I shall be admitted—on Monday next."

"Do you believe in me?"

"I've been paid to discredit you. I can't return the brief, because it's too late. I may have to——"

"I don't care about that. Do you believe in me?"

The man took her hand and put it up to his lips. Then he took a deep breath.

"Of course, I don't," he said. "I'm on the other side."

* * * * *

When upon Thursday evening, Alathea Harwich returned to her father's house, her body felt as though it had been beaten with rods. This was because her innermost soul had been bruised.

She had not given evidence—yet. To-morrow morning she was to enter the box. But she had been in court.

She had seen the quiet dignity of Miss Fennel, the tremulous sincerity of her sister, the outraged devotion of the chauffeur who had served the two, boy and man, for thirty-five years.

She had heard Mr. Tristram, K.C., and, with him, John—John Lambourne, presenting their simple case in calm, restrained language and dealing with rough and smooth in the same well-mannered way.

She had also heard Mr. Habakkuk. The latter was plainly skilful. His manners, however, left much to be desired. His junior was a nephew of Mr. Lemonbaum and strikingly resembled his uncle in colour and speech.

'Tops' had given evidence and had made a very poor show. He had not broken down, but, when he was put to the touch, he had not 'come off'. He had lied, but without conviction. The man had a good heart and was frankly ashamed. His patent infirmity of purpose had inflamed Miss Deodore with the spirit of Lady Macbeth.

'Give me the daggers.'

For sheer audacity her performance must stand alone.

With an air of the most artless and child-like innocence, she left no stone unturned to glorify the defendant and bring the plaintiff and her cause into contempt. Tristram could do nothing with her. Faithfully maintaining the demeanour of a scandalized nun, she omitted no circumstance of outrage. Misrepresentation, ridicule, abuse flowed from her guileless answers with the winning simplicity of a mountain rill. Her manifest reluctance to condemn was a peculiar triumph. Counsel had repeatedly to request her to raise her voice.

The Judge, who did not go to theatres, was duly impressed and joined in the roars of laughter again and again. The jury laughed also. Later, the general public could hardly believe its eyes.

The Court had adjourned, and Alathea Harwich had slipped away.

As she drove down the Strand, the evening papers were reeking with the savoury stew.

'STAGE FAVOURITES IN THE BOX.'

None of them explained that Miss Deodore's back answers were due to the ingenuousness of a nun.

* * * * *

John Lambourne rose to his feet and looked up at the witness-box.

Alathea looked back.

"Were you in court yesterday, Lady Alathea?"

"Yes."

"All day?"

"Yes."

"Then you know that there is a direct conflict of evidence upon not one, but nearly every vital point?"

"Yes."

"In other words, that one side or the other is misrepresenting the facts?"

"I suppose so."

"Very well. On the day of the accident where did you lunch?"

"At a private house in the country."

"With Miss Deodore and Mr. Shoal?"

"Yes."

"The accident happened at six?"

"Yes."

"What time did you leave the private house?"

"I don't remember."

"Before tea?"

"Oh, no. It was after tea."

As she spoke, Alathea remembered that Mona and 'Tops' had sworn that they had no tea.

"You did have tea, then?"

"Yes."

"Were you offered anything instead of tea?"

"I was."

"But you drank tea?"

"Yes."

"What did Miss Deodore do, while you were having tea?"

"She sat with us."

"And Mr. Shoal?"

"I think so."

"But had no tea?"

"No."

"Were they offered anything instead of tea?"

"I expect so. I don't remember."

"Did they take anything instead of tea?"

Alathea braced herself.

"No."

"You can't remember whether they were offered anything, but you can remember that they didn't take anything. Is that right?"

"Yes."

"I see. Why is their abstention impressed upon your memory? Was it unusual?"

"I don't know. I just happen to remember."

"Didn't it surprise you?"

"I never thought about it."

"I see. What were you offered? A cocktail?"

"Yes."

"Were cocktails mixed?"

"Yes."

"And consumed?"

"Yes."

"But not by Miss Deodore or Mr. Shoal?"

"No."

"It was a small party. I think only six in all?"

"That's right."

"How many drank tea?"

"Two of us."

"So that only two drank the cocktails?"

"Yes."

"Were they mixed in the room?"

"Yes."

"Who mixed them?"

"I think Mr. Shoal did."

"Why?"

"I don't know. I think he was asked to."

"Was it his own receipt?"

"It may have been."

"But, in spite of that, he didn't drink one?"

"No."

"Weren't you pressed to have one?"

"Yes."

"Wasn't he? I mean, he'd made them."

"I expect he was."

"But he refused?"

"He didn't drink one."

"Nor Miss Deodore?"

"No."

"Did you refuse because there weren't enough to go round?"

"No. I preferred tea."

"Are you sure there were enough to go round?"

"More than enough. I tell you, I preferred tea."

"'More than enough', and there were six of you. Then he made seven or eight?"

Alathea moistened her lips.

"I can't remember. I know that there were enough."

"That would be six—at least?"

"Yes."

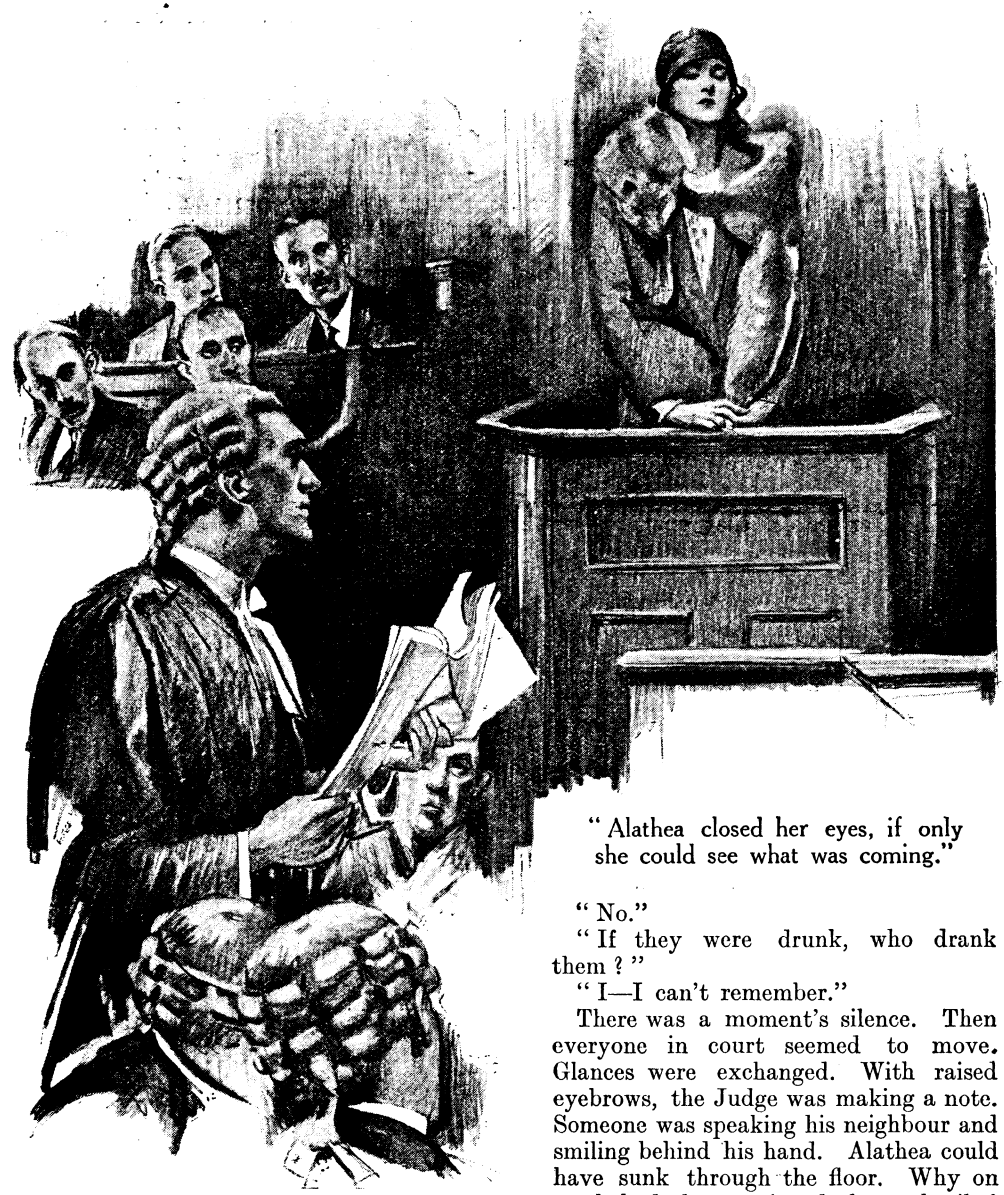
"There were, therefore, at least four cocktails going spare?"

"I suppose so."

"The special cocktails which Mr. Shoal had taken the trouble to mix?"

"They may have been drunk. I don't know."

"Will you swear that they were *not* drunk?"



"Alathea closed her eyes, if only she could see what was coming."

"And two of you drank tea?"

"Yes."

"And two of you drank nothing?"

"Yes."

"No."

"If they were drunk, who drank them?"

"I—I can't remember."

There was a moment's silence. Then everyone in court seemed to move. Glances were exchanged. With raised eyebrows, the Judge was making a note. Someone was speaking his neighbour and smiling behind his hand. Alathea could have sunk through the floor. Why on earth had she mentioned the cocktails? She had shown the truth, but not told it. She had . . .

"Now, after tea, Lady Alathea, you left in the car?"

"Yes."

"Miss Deodore was due at the theatre at eight o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Were you due anywhere?"

"No."

"Where were you going?"

"I was with Miss Deodore."

"Were you going to the theatre?"



"I can't remember exactly, but I expect I was to be dropped."

"At some point near your home?"

"Yes."

"That was what usually happened upon excursions like this?"

"Yes."

"Did you ever dine with Miss Deodore?"

"Sometimes."

"At what hour?"

"About seven o'clock."

"But on this occasion you were to dine at home?"

"Yes."

"At what time do you dine—at your home?"

Alathea hesitated.

"At half-past seven," she said.

"So that, if you were not to be late, you would have to be dropped not later than seven o'clock?"

"Thereabouts."

"Were you expecting to be late?"

"I must have been."

"Nearly an hour late?"

"Yes."

"The accident occurred forty miles from London?"

"Yes."

"If those forty miles had been covered in an hour, you would not have been late, would you?"

"No."

"And Miss Deodore and Mr. Shoal would have had time for dinner?"

"Yes."

"The car was quite capable of doing it, wasn't it?"

"I should say so."

"Have you ever known Miss Deodore miss her dinner before?"

"I think she usually went home."

"Have you ever known her not do so?"

"I wasn't with her all the time. Her servants could probably——"

"Have *you* ever known her not do so?"

"No."

"Yet on this occasion, though they had had nothing since lunch, she and Mr. Shoal deliberately determined to forgo their dinner and make you an hour late, rather than exceed an average of twenty miles an hour?"

"I don't know what they determined."

"But you knew they were driving to the theatre?"

"They hadn't said so."

"What? No discussion at all?"

"I—I don't think so," desperately.

"Then you thought that Miss Deodore was going home?"

"I don't think I thought about it at all."

"You took it for granted?"

"I may have."

"But wasn't it obvious that she couldn't do it?"

"I don't know. It—it all depended."

"On what?"

"On—on the traffic we met."

"Didn't it depend upon what pace you went?"

"I suppose so—to some extent."

"Almost entirely, Lady Alathea?"

"To a great extent."

"Exactly. And is that why it never occurred to you that Miss Deodore was not going home?"

Alathea looked round helplessly.

The Judge laid down his pen.

"Listen," he said. "Miss Deodore usually went home—to dinner, about seven o'clock. If it was clear that, so far from following this practice, unless she drove direct to the theatre, she would not be in time to take her place upon the stage, wouldn't it have been the natural thing for somebody to say so?"

"I—I think it would, my lord."

"If, on the other hand, you were all three well aware that the car in Mr. Shoal's hands would bring Miss Deodore to her home by seven o'clock, there would have been no reason to say anything?"

"No, my lord."

"Nothing *was* said?"

"No, my lord."

The Judge sat back in his seat, and again the tell-tale rustle ran through the court. Another round was over. Alathea closed her eyes. If only she could see what was coming. Of course she should have said . . .

Lambourne was speaking.

"When did you first see the plaintiff's car?"

"Not until we were upon it."

"The instant before the smash?"

"As the smash occurred."

"How was it you didn't see it before?"

"I wasn't looking out."

"Where were you looking?"

"I think I was looking to my right."

"At what?"

"At Miss Deodore."

"And Mr. Shoal?"

"They were both on my right."

"What were they doing?"

"So far as I remember, they were laughing."

"Were they looking out?"

"Yes."

"Will you swear that?"

"Yes."

"What happened next?"

"The accident."

"As you looked round?"

"Yes."

"What made you look round?"

"I don't know."

"You didn't expect an accident?"

"Oh, no."

"You were looking at your companions, who were laughing: as you looked round, the accident occurred?"

Alathea nodded.

"They were laughing when the accident occurred?"

"I didn't say that."

"They were laughing when you looked away?"

"I think so."

"And, as you looked away, the accident occurred?"

"Yes."

"No warning cry from Miss Deodore?"

"No."

"No exclamation from Mr. Shoal?"

"I didn't hear one."

"Although they were looking out?"

"It was all over in a flash."

"Didn't you cry out?"

"Yes—too late."

As she said the words, Alathea could have bitten out her tongue.

"Too late for what?"

"To be of any good."

"What did you exclaim?"
"I think I cried out 'Look out'."
"Whom were you addressing?"
"No one in particular."
"Weren't you addressing Mr. Shoal?"
"I suppose I must have been."
"Endeavouring to warn him?"
"He didn't need any warning."
"Because he was looking out?"
"Yes."
"Then, even if you had cried out before you did, it would have been futile?"
"I—I imagine so."
"Because he was looking out?"
"Yes."
"Then, what did you mean just now when you said that you cried out 'too late'? '*Too late to be of any good*'?"
There was a deadly silence.
Alathea stared straight ahead.
"You see my point, Lady Alathea?"
"I—I think so."
"If Mr. Shoal *hadn't* been looking out, your injunction would have been very appropriate, wouldn't it?"
"Yes."
"And, delivered a little earlier, very valuable?"
"Yes."
"Wasn't that just what you meant when you said that you cried out 'too late'?"
"No."
"Then what did you mean?"
"It—it was just an expression."
Again that movement—more pronounced this time. The Associate looked up at the ceiling and then away. There was a definite murmur. An usher cried 'Silence!' suddenly. Alathea felt cold with shame. Why on earth had she made that mistake? In the papers to-morrow—to-night . . .
"Only one more matter, Lady Alathea. After the accident you got out?"
"Yes."
"I think there was a discussion."
"Yes."
"Did you join in it?"
"No."
"Did you hear it?"
"Some of it."
"Each party insisted that the other was in the wrong?"
"Yes."
"Everybody was shaken up?"
"Naturally."
"The Misses Fennel were imprisoned within their car?"
"Yes."
"Do you agree that there was an unfortunate scene?"
"Yes."
"Miss Deodore was greatly offended?"
"She had reason to be."
"Did you try to get her away?"
"I suggested that it was no good quarrelling."
"Effectually?"
"Not at first."
"Why?"
"She wouldn't listen to me."
"Was she beside herself?"
"She was highly indignant."
"And abusive?"
Alathea hesitated.
"I don't think she knew what she was saying."
"Would you say the same of Miss Fennel?"
"She seemed more collected."
"Although she is more than twice Miss Deodore's age?"
"She had not been insulted."
"By a suggestion of intemperance?"
"Yes."
"Do you attribute Miss Deodore's behaviour to that suggestion?"
"Entirely. It made her see red."
"Because it was untrue?"
"Of course."
"Wasn't her conduct equally consistent with its truth?"
"I don't think so."
"Wasn't it? Quick to take offence—not knowing what she was saying—refusing to listen to her friends. Isn't that precisely the way of someone who has been drinking?"
"I am not in a position to judge."
"You attribute it entirely to Miss Fennel's remark?"
"I have said so."
"Did you hear the remark?"
"Yes."
Lambourne looked suddenly away.
"What inspired that remark, Lady Alathea?"
"How can I say?"
"You were present: you heard the remark. Remarks like that are not made out of the blue. It wasn't, for instance, addressed to you, was it? Why was it addressed to Miss Deodore?"
"I wasn't taking part in the discussion."
"But Miss Deodore was?"
"Yes."
"What did she say immediately before that remark was made?"
"I—I can't remember."

"Was she insisting that the others were in the wrong?"

"Probably."

"Furiously?"

"Heatedly."

"Abusively?"

"I—I don't think so. She was very upset."

"This was before the remark was made?"

"Yes."

"Then her excited condition was *not* entirely due to the suggestion of intemperance?"

"She had had a great shock."

"So had Miss Fennel: but she was perfectly calm."

"If she had been, I don't think she would have made such a remark."

"I suggest that Miss Fennel did no more than indicate an unpleasant truth."

"No."

"Which Miss Deodore proceeded to confirm."

"No."

"She didn't say it of Mr. Shoal?"

"She might just as well have," hotly.

"With equal justice?"

"With equal injustice. It was a rotten thing to say."

"Wasn't it a statement of fact?"

"No."

"Then it was an irrelevant lie?"

"Yes."

"Mere vulgar abuse?"

"That's what it amounted to."

"Unprovoked?"

"Yes."

"Spoken by a lady who appeared to be collected and calm?"

"She appeared to be."

"Weren't you greatly surprised?"

"Yes."

"The remark was addressed to her sister?"

"Yes."

"'The woman has been drinking, Fanny'?"

"Yes."

"Did you hear her sister's reply?"

"Yes."

"'They both have.'"

"Yes."

"More abuse?"

"Yes."

"This time embracing Mr. Shoal?"

"Yes."

"No doubt about that?"

"I can see none."

"Did Mr. Shoal show resentment?"

"I couldn't say."

"Where was he standing?"

"On the other side of Miss Deodore."

"She was between you?"

"Yes."

"Were they arm in arm?"

"No. She had hold of my arm."

"Miss Fennel didn't say 'They all have'?"

"No."

"There were three of you?"

"Yes."

"And she said 'They both have'?"

"Yes."

"You knew who she meant?"

Alathea hesitated.

"I . . ."

"You could see no doubt about it a moment ago."

"I assumed that she didn't mean me."

"Why?"

Alathea stood very still. A moment ago she had been getting into her stride—putting things right, a moment ago. And now . . .

"Why?"

Before the dread monosyllable a hand crept up to her mouth. The Judge was looking—peering over his glasses in a curiously owl-like way. The jury was leaning forward. In the well of the court Mr. Lemonbaum, shining with sweat, was blowing his nose.

Lambourne sat down.

* * * * *

"Mr. John Lambourne."

Alathea slid across the floor.

"How d'ye do?" she said, shaking hands. She turned to Lady Level. "Mother, this is Mr. Lambourne. I think he's come because I bet him he wouldn't."

"I came because I wanted to," said Lambourne.

Lady Level smiled.

"I hope you'll believe we're glad to have you, Mr. Lambourne."

"It requires an effort, Lady Level."

"Please sit down and make it. I want to talk to you."

Alathea returned to the dance and Lambourne sat down.

"Is it your fault, Mr. Lambourne, that my daughter was on the wrong side?"

"It was my great misfortune."

"You met it uncommonly well."

"I might have spared her, Lady Level."

"If I thought you had spared her, I

shouldn't be speaking to you now. How did she behave ? "

" As was to be expected—superbly."

Lady Level sighed.

" It didn't read very well. That unfortunate question of drink."

" Everyone in court," said Lambourne, " could see that she had been roped in. I mean, it stood out."

" And everyone out of court associates her with a drunken frolic which developed into an indecent brawl. I asked eighty people to-night, and less than fifty have come."

" But that's absurd," cried Lambourne.

" No, it isn't," said Lady Level. " Even to-day there are some things you mustn't do. Never mind. How's Mr. Lemonbaum ? "

" I don't know the gentleman," said Lambourne. " He perspired more than usual on Friday, and, when the jury found for the plaintiff, he went a still darker green."

" I'm so thankful they did," said his hostess. " At least we haven't got a miscarriage of justice upon our souls."

" You owe that to Lady Alathea. She did her best for her side, but——"

" We owe it to you, Mr. Lambourne. I don't suppose Miss Deodore will remember you in her prayers, but—well, you must see why we're grateful."

" I'm not sure that I do."

" Alathea was between the devil and the deep sea. Her sometime friends were the devil, and the deep sea was the truth. You led her into the water against her will."

" I made her very wet," said Lambourne.

" Of course. And she'll take time to dry. But the other way she would have been scarred. I'm so glad he perspired—Mr. Lemonbaum. Of course he's the villain of the piece."

" Without a doubt. The action should never have been fought. He could have settled not once, but a dozen times."

" He's the father of lies, Mr. Lambourne. Come and have dinner on Thursday, and we'll tear him and eat him again. My husband will assist. Besides, he wants to meet you."

" I'd love to."

" That's right. You're really a great comfort. If you knew the relief of being able to talk with freedom to someone who's on the right side. Did she hold her head up ? "

" Throughout."

Lady Level nodded approvingly.

* * * * *

Six weeks had gone by, and a game of tennis was ending on the sunk court at Sillabub Hall.

The place was peaceful—had slept at the foot of the Mendips for nearly four hundred years. The Levels loved it. Lord Level himself was never really happy away. Its woods and pastures and waters, its famous lawns and box hedges, its chestnuts and copper beeches, its farms and homesteads made up a fairy-tale kingdom it was his delight to maintain. No estate in all England was better cared for. The manor-house was not big—could shelter, perhaps, ten guests. These, as a rule, were Alathea's. The Levels' only son had been killed in the War.

" Game, set," said Alathea. " You're much too good. I shan't play you single again. Why didn't you go to the Cheese Fair ? "

" Because," said Lambourne, " I wanted to stay with you."

" And be played up ? You're very faithful."

" I'm human," said Lambourne steadily.

Alathea smiled.

" The others won't be back for an hour. Come and sit down and tell me how lovely I am."

" That's very easy," said Lambourne.

It was. Clean-limbed, straight, slender, the girl was most clearly thoroughbred. Her nose was aquiline ; her brown eyes were set far apart ; the delicate curve of her mouth gave a fine face real beauty.

Alathea flung out a laugh.

" John, dear, you're hopeless. ' The best legs in London ', and my name is mud."

" You know it isn't," said Lambourne.

" I've had four invitations *in all*, since I went through the hoop."

" Jealousy," said the man. " You know that as well as I. You're dangerous—highly dangerous. An excuse to omit you is just what the girls' mothers want."

" Put it that way if you like. It comes to the same thing. I am disqualified."

" Suspended," said Lambourne. " Suspended for a couple of months."

" Or years," said Alathea. " I mayn't be down and out, but I'm certainly down. And I wouldn't care a kick, if I didn't know it was just. I bought it, John. I said ' I'll have that ' and bought it. That's what fazes your idol."

"I refuse to argue," said Lambourne. "Everyone knows you're white, so what do you care?"

"You told me once you didn't believe in me."

"You knew it was a lie, Alathea."

The girl nodded thoughtfully.

"Yes. I knew it was a lie. At least, I was almost sure. But you made me uncertain in court."

"When I cross-examined you?"

"Yes. You treated me perfectly, of course: but you were so very plainly Miss Fennel's man."

"I'll wager Miss Fennel believed in you."

"I wish I could think so. Never mind. You made me lie and then made me show I was lying. I found it hard to believe that, if you believed in me, you could do such a thing so well."

"What you said was nothing," said Lambourne. "I saw the truth in your eyes—like everyone else."

"Was that why it was so easy?"

"Of course. You gave yourself away. They were very strong cocktails, weren't they?"

"Yes."

"And Miss Deodore drank two, and Shoal drank three?"

"Three apiece."

"And the car was doing sixty, because they had to be home by seven o'clock?"

"Yes."

"Neither was looking out?"

"No."

"And both were splashed?"

"Yes."

"Well, that's what your eyes told me. They also said, 'This is the most humiliating day of my life. I should never have been with these people. I can't think why I was such a fool. If they win their case, it'll be an outrage: but I *was* with them and *I will not let them down.*'"

"They must be very eloquent—my eyes."

"They are."

Alathea lay back on the turf and stared at the sky.

"But what you really love is my mouth, isn't it?"

"Yes."

"And the way I sit on a table, half off and half on?"

"Yes."

"And you'd like to know what I mean when I talk about 'playing you up'?"

"How did you know, Alathea?"

"Your eyes, my dear. That's why I was uncertain in court. I searched them for adoration—and went empty away."

"Of course. I was against you. My job was to get you unstuck. I had to pretend you were one of Miss Deodore's crowd."

"You did it very well, John."

"I think I did. You see, I was ready, Alathea. I'd seen you. I knew you. That night at Mrs. Dellaby Low's. Till then, I was fully expecting to have to deal with one of Miss Deodore's crowd. If I hadn't been ready, I shouldn't have put up such a show. You'd have staggered me—knocked me out. Tristram said to me afterwards, 'You did awfully well, Lambourne, but I don't know how you had the heart.'"

"What did you say?"

"I said I hoped and believed you would understand."

"And came to Charles Street with your heart in your mouth?"

"Yes."

"As well as in your eyes?"

"I suppose so."

Alathea sat up.

"John, you're a lamb. In court you wear wolf's clothing, and wear it devilish well. If you take my advice, you'll wear it out of court, too. Otherwise you'll get eaten. You got badly bitten, when they sent you to the Dellaby Lows'. If I hadn't been by, you'd have been chewed. And now I'm biting you—deliberately letting you love me and playing you up. Those a lamb likes will always do that to-day: and those he doesn't care for will always twist his tail. So wear your wolf's clothing, John, and pass in the crowd."

"I like your bites," said Lambourne.

"Ah," said my lady, rising. "Wait till you're licking your wounds."

They strolled to the house and passed through a sunlit parlour into the cool of the hall. This was dim and silent. Its great flagstones, laid with rugs, gave back no sound: its dark, oak walls rendered no light.

A splash of white on a table argued the afternoon mail.

Lambourne stooped to peer at the letters. Because of the sunshine without, the addresses were hard to read. He shut his eyes for a moment—then stooped again.

As he did so, he knew that Alathea was peering too. She was right by his side. Her hair was brushing his shoulder; he could feel her breath on his cheek.

Something in the man snapped asunder.



"Alathea lay back on the turf and stared at the sky."

In an instant, his arms were round her and her slim form was braced against his.

Cool hands held off his head.

"That'll do," said Alathea. "That's just as far as I allow wolves to go."

"And lambs?" said John shakily.

"Lambs don't do this sort of thing."

"Yes, they do. Once in their lives."

"Only once, John?"

"Only once, my darling. I want you to be my wife."

"But I've told you again and again I was playing you up."

"I don't care. I'll buy it. Turn me down or take me. I've come to the end of my rope."

Alathea put her arms round his neck.

"Wait till this has blown over—till I'm reinstated, my dear."

"Why on earth should I? I love you. What if some cur dogs snap at your precious heels?"

"I'm marked, darling. You know it."

"I don't. If you were stained, d'you think I'd care? I love you, Alathea. I loved you that night on the steps, when I picked up your bag. It broke my heart that black Friday to do you down. And—and I can't go on without you, I love you so."

He kissed her tenderly, and her hands went about his head.

"Why do you think I asked you that night if you believed in me? That night at the Dellaby Lows'? Why should I have cared whether you believed in me or not?"

"I don't know. I've often wondered."

"Because I loved you, my darling. You were so clean and honest and—and so astoundingly brave."

"Brave, Alathea sweetheart?"

"Brave. I had just saved you—risked quite a lot to do an absolute stranger a very good turn. Then came the stranger's chance to repay his debt. And you wouldn't take it—*wouldn't smell it*, because you were pledged against me, against the pretty lady who'd saved your life. I fancy it took some courage to play that game."

John Lambourne swallowed.

"I'd taken their money, my darling. I had no choice."

Alathea laughed softly. Then she drew down his head and kissed his eyes.

Presently they returned to the letters.

There was one for Alathea from Lincoln's Inn Fields. . . .

The sudden death of Miss Angela Fennel occurred yesterday.

We are instructed by Miss Fanny Fennel to enclose a copy of a Codicil which the deceased executed less than six weeks ago and to request that you will believe that the Will contains no direction which she, as sole executrix, will more whole-heartedly discharge.

The Codicil was very simple.

I, Angela Fennel, of High Woods, do make and declare this to be a Codicil to my last Will, which Will bears date the seventeenth day of April 1902. *I give and bequeath unto Lady Alathea Harwich of* 66 *Charles Street, W., whom I do not know, whom I have set eyes on but twice, whose behaviour on each of those most trying occasions commanded my unbounded admiration, the sum of five thousand pounds, which I hope she will accept, as a token of my respect and esteem.*

There was a pregnant silence.

At length—

"How—how very sweet of her," said Alathea tremulously.

"And far-seeing," said John, holding her very close. "It'll be in all the papers."

"How soon?"

"I don't know. Not for two or three weeks, I expect. The Will must be proved."

Alathea set her cheek against his.

"That's right," she said contentedly. "I don't want it in yet."

"Why not, darling? Why——"

"I want our engagement in first. I'd like everyone to know that John Lambourne asked me to marry him, when I was down."

Our next issue will contain a further story by Dornford Yates.

WOOD SONG.

SING to me, river and tree and flower—
I would be simple too.
I would be swift and proud and lovely,
Like you.

Slow-changing rocks in a hurting world,
Still and grave and strong,
Give me your stillness when I have done
With song.

CHARLOTTE ARTHUR.

GAMBLER'S HOPE

By J. J. Bell

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," etc.

"*In yonder well lies treasure, ancient, rare,*
Rich gems,—a woman's hope, a man's despair."
ANON.

SYNOPSIS OF OPENING CHAPTERS.

The story, set in three generations, begins in a London hotel, where Flora Ballantyre, a Highland girl recently married, is suddenly called upon to "mother" a wee Spanish boy whose "madre" has just died and whose father is in the wilds of South America.

Nearly a quarter of a century passes. Flora, now Lady Ballantyre, has been seven years a widow. A March afternoon finds her seated in the garden of a Spanish hotel with Luis de Lara, now a man of thirty. Though comfortably provided for under her husband's will, she has been speculating and is in financial difficulties. She has come to Spain and summoned Luis in order to put his devotion to the test. It transpires, however, that, so far from being wealthy, Luis' only inheritance from his father consists of ancient manuscripts, books, pictures, etc., which may have no cash value at all. A thinly veiled hint is sufficient to lead Luis to declare that though, as a de Lara, he would have to be hungry indeed before he would take an heirloom to market, there is one being to whom, were she in need, he would certainly say, "Lady, all in my house is yours."

Lady Ballántyre, secretly ashamed and abashed, is aware that with advancing years Luis' childish adoration has taken a warmer form. Scarcely a dozen years separate them. Was there—could there be—any sort of response in her heart? While she toys with the idea her son, Steve, appears.

She is hoping that he will become engaged to Winifred Charteris, who has £80,000 of her own, but during a yachting cruise in Scottish waters Steve has met Ailsa Maclean, a kinswoman, and Lady Ballantyre fears complications. Steve is arranging another cruise in the *Miranda* during August and invites Luis to join them at Tobermory. Luis, after some persuasion, agrees, partly as a distraction from secret remorse (he has unintentionally killed a Spaniard during a brawl), partly because he is interested in a story of a Spanish dagger and a scrap of parchment possessed by Ailsa's father, Donald Maclean, attached to which is a legend of buried treasure to which his own father's papers make reference.

V.

WHEN all is said, Gambling is but a euphemism for Self-torment. If there is one person more than another who, sooner or later, recognises a fool in the mirror, it is the gambler. For the amateur, at least, the end is humiliation.

The gambler has a keen sense of honour. No one so anxious as the gambler to pay his debts—his gambling debts. Flora Ballantyre had that sense, but she had another sense which all gamblers do not seem to possess—a sense of decency. We may argue that she must have lost it before she took her son's fortune to further her Stock Exchange speculations; nevertheless it was still with her, for what else but a sense of decency had withheld her from taking the help of Luis de Lara, the man who, she knew in her heart, would have given his last *peseta* for love of her blue eyes?

Yes, it was still with her, that sense of decency, on the fourth day after de Lara's departure, though struggling weakly against her gambler's sense of honour. Those had been dreadful days for Flora Ballantyre, dreadful days and nights. Doubtless she was only one of hundreds of young, old and middle-aged hopefuls who, for the best reasons in the world, and the worst on the Stock Exchange, had bought the shares

of Floss, Limited, colloquially known as "Flossies," for "a substantial rise." And within the space of three months "Flossies" had fallen from over four pounds to about seventeen shillings. Again and again this poor dupe, deeming the turn was at hand, had bought more, only to swell her losses by thousands. Hers was now no longer the question of daring to buy, but of venturing to retain what she had, since any further fall would, in view of the settlement next week, mean a most embarrassing liability. The position at the moment was, indeed, so perilous that but for Steve, who must not on any account be allowed to suspect, she would have been on her way back to London to arrange certain matters with her banker.

The thought of her son oppressed her; it raised forebodings more fearful than did the thought of her own dangers. She had been so long used to abundance that, in order to understand the meaning of privation, she would have to experience it. In recent years her dealings with Society had been dwindling, and the possibility of a social downfall was not in itself a thought very horrifying. At any rate, it was the least of her torments. The terror that made her cold and the shame that made her hot were in the visions of a sudden light of discovery in the honest grey eyes of her own boy. Steve's unexpected request, the other day, for five hundred pounds of his own money had shaken her; in a twinkling she had perceived how near she was to the outer edge of safety, of secrecy; ever since then she had been imagining further requests, quite reasonable, but large enough to be just beyond her resources. Meditating at the writing-table in her private sitting-room, she was thankful for one solitary thing—Steve's absence. On the other hand, she plagued herself with wondering whether her farewell yesterday had seemed furtive, and how she would manage to face him frankly on his return to-morrow. If only she had not used Steve's money! If only she could replace it! If only she had never begun this speculation! If only—how often do the contemplations of the gambler begin with those two little words!

It was half-past five. She had forgotten the tea which the servant had brought half an hour ago. It had been followed almost immediately by the telegram still in her hand.

"Flossies 176."

What would the gambler do without the Post Office—or the Post Office without the gambler?

She re-read the telegram. It conveyed an explanation to the effect that the day's sensational fall had been brought about by the forced closing of "weak bull" accounts. The term "weak bull" did not strike her as funny when applied to herself, Lady Flora Ballantyre. The humorous side is rarely visible to the gambler. What did strike her was the sudden question: Had the stockbroker meant the information as a hint that the worst was over, that it was time to buy more "Flossies"?

She dropped the telegram on the blotter. With palms pressed to temples, fingers beating nervously upon that lovely gold hair of hers, which, it was written, was to fade in a night not so far distant, with the long lashes fallen drearily over the blue eyes, she sat huddled there, tormenting herself.

Impossible! Without more money quickly available she would be mad to add to her commitments. While the message definitely encouraged her—decided her, in fact—to continue to run the present great risk, it merely tempted her to run a greater. No, no; she must not even think of it! . . . And yet—and yet the greater risk might mean salvation—speedy salvation. After that ruinous fall there was almost certain to be a smart rebound. If only she could take advantage of it! With twenty thousand shares more, a rise of only twenty-five shillings would balance her actual loss on "Flossies," and give her enough money in hand to replace nearly half of Steve's capital. And perhaps this was the turn of her luck all round! . . . But no!—she must—must not dream of it! And so she dreamed of it. . . .

She became aware that she was parched and weary. Her head ached dully. She got up and drank a cup of the over-brewed tea. For a minute or two she paced the carpet. If only she could put herself right with Steve! Why, the boy's whole future depended on her doing so! Surely this was the moment of opportunity. . . . It was certainly the moment when Flora Ballantyre's sense of decency deserted her.

Seated again at the table, she wrote her instructions to buy twenty thousand shares. Then she took a blank form and laid it on the blotter.

"Oh, God, I don't *want* to do it!" she whispered—and wrote the name and address of Luis de Lara. . . .

What should she say to Luis? Remind

him of what had been equivalent to a promise to help? Ah, he knew she did not need to use so many words. At last she gripped the pen, set her lips and wrote:

"In difficulty—Flora."

It was enough—she knew it was enough. He would be with her on the morrow.

A wave of faintness came and passed. She put the two forms together and was about to ring for a messenger, when there was a knock, and a servant entered, presenting his tray with a card on it.

MR. LUIS DE LARA

She drew in her breath, recovered herself, and said:

"I will see the gentleman—in five minutes—not sooner, you understand? And take this to the office." She gave him the message to the stockbroker.

The man bowed and went out. For a full minute she sat very still, with her hands hiding her face. Why had Luis come? She was not prepared. What was she to say to him? Suppose he was here to ask her to marry him. . . . If only she could go into his arms and forget, while the world fell in ruins around her! She had never wanted Luis as she wanted him now. . . . But she could not marry him and then beggar him, for that was what marriage would mean. Nor could she refuse to marry him, and then crave his help. And yet his help she must have. She had deliberately put herself into that desperate situation by sending off the telegram to the stockbroker. . . . Of a sudden she knew what she must do. Whether or not marriage was in his mind, she must take no chances. At the very outset she must confess herself and her miserable straits. Then, as she could not doubt, he would offer her his possessions, but, having nothing left, never himself. . . .

Her hands fell. She went hastily to the adjoining room and faced the mirror. "You beast!" she muttered—and proceeded to preen herself.

She received him with a melancholy air, and his apparent failure to notice it, though his glance was hungry for her face, made her pause in her design. He was first to speak.

"You are surprised to see me, Lady?"

"Why, yes, I am," she answered, smiling faintly. "But be seated, and let me get you tea."

"Thanks, no." He drew a chair near to the one she had taken. "But I am going to surprise you still more!"

"A whisky and soda, then, or——"

"Pardon, but I need nothing except your attention." His dark eyes were very bright. "Lady, I have come to tell you of an incredible coincidence."

She checked a sigh of relief. So, after all, it was not marriage—not, at least, for the present. Curiosity ousted anxiety, but only to be replaced next instant by inspiration. Was not this her opportunity?

"My dear Señor, life is full of incredible coincidences," she said. "For instance, I was about to—write to you, when your card was brought to me."

"Were you?" His voice was eager. "Something important?" Then, ere she could reply: "You must tell me presently, but first let me give you my news. When I was here, the other day, I told you—or, perhaps it was Steve—that I was going to look up certain of my father's writings relating to—our ancestors who went out with the Armada."

"Steve has gone over to Gibraltar——"

"Has he? Well, in any case, I should be giving the news first to you. Yesterday I dug into the papers and found a good deal more than I expected. I cannot at the moment tell you all about all my seafaring ancestors"—Luis gave a small laugh and produced a long envelope,—"but I can tell you something quite interesting about one of them!" He drew out and unfolded a tattered, brown-stained sheet of parchment, and offered it to her. "Lady, remembering our talk the other evening, does not this suggest something familiar—Tobermory, for example?"

Lady Ballantyre, making neither sound nor movement, stared at the thing.

"I told you it was incredible!" said Luis. "Don't be afraid to touch it. It is not so filthy as it looks, and the microbes must have died, or removed, many generations ago."

"What are the brown marks?" she abruptly enquired, though she was not thinking of the brown marks.

"Once blood, I'm afraid. Steve would not like it, and, perhaps, after all, I ought not to ask you to handle it."

With a grimace she took hold of it. "Luis, are you telling me that this has to do with the treasure we were talking about?"

"There is no doubt of that! But there may have been, though it is barely possible, more than one document dealing with the treasure, and I am hoping for your assurance

that your cousin's fragment would fit into that gap on the left-hand side."

"It's so long since I saw my cousin's fragment," she slowly answered, "that I can't be absolutely certain; but I should say it was about the size and shape of the gap."

"Cannot you remember anything of the words on the fragment?"

"Sorry. . . . But at the torn edge there was part of an oddly shaped blot—why, surely the rest of it is here!"

"Lady, you have answered me!"

There was a pause till she said:

"You think that this horrid thing—do take it away!—may be of importance?"

"You must judge of that for yourself, after I have told you its history, as reconstructed by my father." He refolded the parchment tenderly and replaced it in the envelope. "My father used his imagination, but it was inspired by facts discovered in his research. He was not a story-teller; his essay on the subject is very dry indeed."

"Tell me one thing now," said Lady Ballantyre. "What was the treasure?"

"Jewels—the Jewels of Santa Barbara. My father, according to his information, estimated their present-day value at over a million, in English money."

Lady Ballantyre gave a little gasp. Lights leapt up in the blue eyes. "And where——?"

"Please!" Luis smiled gravely. "Let me begin at the beginning and answer your questions before they are asked." He consulted some pencil jottings on the envelope. "In the first place," he proceeded, "the parchment was written by a monk, Sebastiano. He had charge of the jewels—diamonds, rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and others less precious—which were contained in a casket of lead. My father discovered among some archives an inventory of them."

"How on earth did he——?"

"You will understand presently. Why the jewels should have been on a ship of the Armada—if the *Florencia* was really such a ship—can only be conjectured. But as there was no doubt in Spain as to the coming defeat and occupation of England, it is reasonable to suppose that the jewels were being carried there for some purpose of the re-established Church. Anyhow, they were in the care of this monk, and we may believe that he guarded them day and night. It seems likely, too, that they cost him his life. His rather matter-of-fact message on the parchment points to tragedy. It tells how, warned in a dream of a disaster to the ship, he went ashore with the casket, and how he was followed thither by someone, who, he feared, would attempt to kill him. One imagines him, fearing the worst and thinking only of his charge, seeking a safe place for the casket and, having found one, sitting down and scrawling—in his own blood, my father says—this document in the hope that it would survive him and fall into the right hands. Just what he intended to do with it cannot be known. He did not quite finish it."

"Then——?"

"It breaks off, and one may imagine that that was the end of him. Discovery and a knife!"

"Poor man!"

"Yes—and we shall never know for certain whether it was your ancestor, or mine, who did it."

"Luis, what are you saying?" Lady Ballantyre's head went up.

"My ancestor was a captain of soldiers on the ship. Months after the disaster he came back to Spain—to die of his wounds—and brought with him this parchment, leaving a fragment of it in the hand of your ancestor——"

"And a dagger in my ancestor's heart!"

"I'm afraid it was so, Lady. I dare say I should learn something definite from the dagger, if I saw it."

Suddenly she laughed. "What does it matter after all those years? The one was as bad as the other. As you said to Steve the other day—he told me—we admire our ancestors chiefly because we have never met them . . .! I suppose that the old de Lara and the old Maclean were both after the jewels."

"It would seem so. I fancy they were in collusion at first—the fact that your ancestor was killed at his own door suggests as much—and then quarrelled. They were angry at being baulked of the jewels, and blamed each other. Each wanted possession of his victim's writing which neither, in all probability, could read, and they fought for it. As I picture it, de Lara had just dealt the finishing blow when he became aware of someone's approach, and made his escape, wounds and all. There are no details of his journey back to Spain—to a slowly dying man it must have been a terrible experience—but he is mentioned in certain archives as the man who brought

home the first authentic news of the *Florencia's* destruction."

"And the parchment?"

"Ah, he must have been afraid of the parchment! The wonder is that he had not destroyed it. Possibly he hoped to recover and make some use of it to his own profit, though he could hardly have ventured back to Tibbermora, as the name of the place was written then. But, you see, Lady, he had stolen it from the Church, and its discovery in his possession, in Spain, by anyone true to the Church would have been his condemnation. So, as far as we know, he told nobody, but sealed it up and placed it among other documents in a coffer hidden in the wall, where it was found by my father when the house was undergoing repairs, three hundred years after."

"Did not your father do anything but write about it?"

"There was nothing more to be done. From his notes, I gathered that he did once think of going to Tobermory, but apparently he had no hopes of a miraculous survival of the missing fragment."

Lady Ballantyre was leaning forward. "Then the fragment contains some—clue?"

"I am hoping that it may tell just where Sebastiano put the lead casket. At the moment, I know only that he cast it somewhere, presumably in 'Tibbermora.'"

"Luis"—in a hushed voice—"are you asking me to believe that the jewels, wherever they were thrown, are still there?"

"Assuming that your ancestor could read Latin, or knew where the casket was thrown, he died before he could use his knowledge; my ancestor did likewise; the monk never returned to Spain—that has been proved—and he may, therefore, he presumed to have died also; and my Church, which does not sleep, has never since seen, or heard tell of, one of the jewels, many of them being notable, and is satisfied that they are sunk in the mud, somewhere in Tobermory Bay."

"Then they must be where the monk cast them." She drew a long breath. "How wonderful if that fragment of Hector's should tell the secret!"

"How much more wonderful," he said softly, not looking at her, "that all those years ago you should have taken a lonely little boy in your arms! And if through you, Lady, a poor, unworthy man should find those jewels——"

"Luis, tell me—what would you do with them?" Her voice was faint.

There was a promise. On his countenance was a strange and beautiful look of innocence that reminded her of the little boy.

"Yes?" she murmured, puzzled, uneasy.

Slowly he answered, "I would restore them."

"Restore——?"

"To the Church, to which they belong." The look passed. His gaze narrowed. Restoration? Might it not be more than that? A sin-offering? He was thinking not of the monk his ancestor had murdered, or helped to murder, in the dim past, but of the man his own hand had slain, up in the mountains of Toledo, two summers ago. Might not so great an offering do something to remove the secret stain and in a way justify him in abandoning the almost solitary life to which he had condemned himself? Surely there would be hope for him if he could do such a service to his Church—if not to God? He wished he could consult a priest about it. If only he could *buy* freedom! This woman with the blue eyes, how he adored and desired her!

Lady Ballantyre's horrified silence ended at last.

"Luis!"

"Yes, Lady?" he answered, with a start.

"You were jesting just now."

"Jesting?"

"About your Church."

"God forbid! I could not keep the jewels for my own. But if you are thinking, as you would be right to think, of your cousin, can you doubt that the Church would show its—appreciation—appropriately?"

"My cousin is not a Catholic."

"No matter. My Church is generous, and if through Mr. Maclean's help I were able to restore——"

She put up an unsteady hand, and one of the diamonds winked at her.

"The idea of restoring the jewels is a very beautiful one, Luis, but you must consider it calmly. It all happened nearly three hundred and fifty years ago. That ancestor of yours——"

"I am not thinking of him—only of—myself."

"Then," she said quickly, "if you are thinking of yourself, you will do nothing in haste. Your Church does not need the money that those jewels would bring, but you, as you have told me, do need it."

He shook his head. "I cannot tell you why, but it is my belief—my hope, at least

—that in restoring the jewels I should gain a certain salvation—a certain worldly salvation." He smiled suddenly and whimsically. "In the words of the dance-song so popular a few years ago, 'I want to be happy.'"

Lady Ballantyre felt like wringing her hands. What of her own worldly salvation? "We all want to be happy. But we must be practical," she said. "You have always been sentimental. As a boy you were sentimental, and you were the most sentimental—and bravest—soldier of all the soldiers I knew during the War. But those two years in Spain seem to have made you—oh, I don't know what to think of you!"



"You think I am a fool," he said quietly, "and perhaps I am a greater fool than you can think; but let me ask you a question. Suppose you discovered a fortune which, as you were well aware, had been lost by your own Church of England——"

"Scotland!"

"Pardon!—lost by your own Church of Scotland in the distant past—what would you do about it?"

"What I am advising you to do—think first of myself."

"Lady," he said softly, "I do not believe you."

"Still, it is true!" Then her glance wavered; its defiance failed before the tender search of his dark eyes. She was breaking. The words were, somehow, crushed from her. "But—it might not have been true—five years ago."

She faced him no longer. She sat there, staring at the jewels on her hands, yet seeing other jewels, a little mountain of them, many-hued and blazing, poured from a leaden box—so she imagined it—and wondering shamefully whether she had said enough. . . . Would he never speak?

At last he said: "I went away from you, the other night, with the feeling that something was amiss. Now I am sure of it. Can you tell me what it is?"

Crisis! She did not recognise it as such, but she was almost at the second great moment of her life—the moment of decision. His worldly salvation—she would never forget the phrase—or her own—*which*? She knew her power; and she thought she knew herself. She was ready to marry Luis when he asked her. It would be the least she could do, and, besides, she was fond—really very fond—of Luis. When she came to think of it, she had never been so fond of any

other man. Only she was not sentimental and idealistic as he was. Almost certainly she would disappoint him with her lack of response; she was as God had made her; but, such as she was, she would devote herself to his happiness.

Yet she hesitated to let her secret, and with it herself, go. Ought not she to temporise? It was hateful to confess herself a fool, and not an honest one, to Luis who, as child, boy and man, had believed in her. How would Luis take it now, not to think of the future? Not that she was much afraid of Luis in that respect. Luis would always be loyal. Well had she known that he had meant loyalty when he spoke of his only virtue. Still—still—ought not she to delay? On the Stock Exchange all things were possible. Given time——



"She did not watch him as he went to the table, but in the silence she heard the faint sound of the form being unfolded."

"Cannot you tell me?" said Luis. "Is it something to do with Steve? I cannot imagine you with any other serious trouble."

Perhaps it was the mention of her son's name that ended her last hesitation. Just for an instant she had the thought of daring the truth by trusting Steve. Then the thought was gone; all was broken; and she heard herself saying:

"I don't know how to tell you, Luis. When I told you, a little while ago, that I had been about to write to you, it was not quite true. I—I had already written a telegram. . . . You will find it on the blotter, there."

She did not watch him as he went to the table, but in the silence she heard the faint sound of the form being unfolded, and presently:

"What is the difficulty?"

She had to wet her lips. . . . "Money."

"Money!" His voice was hushed by his extreme surprise. In silence he came back to his seat.

After a while she ventured a glance and saw that he was smiling very kindly.

"Well, nearly all of us, as the polite circulars used to say," he said lightly, "suffer at times from temporary financial embarrassment. How much is it? It is nice of you to give me the chance."

Lady Ballantyre felt herself growing cold. It was as though he had expressed himself as delighted to cash a small cheque for her. Clearly he had not imagined her as in deep distress. At the most he was thinking in hundreds. How was she to tell him the truth—the whole truth? For it must be the whole truth. She could bring herself to beggar this man, but not to deceive him—so she honestly believed at the moment. She was not naturally dishonest, and she was wise enough to see that the present in ruins would be less dreadful than an undermined future. With a sob she put up her hands to her pale face.

Luis was no longer smiling; at her tragic movement he became all concern and said:

"Need I remind you of something I told you at our last meeting—something you were pleased to accept as mere Spanish politeness? Lady, I say it, again—all in my house is yours."

She let fall her hands and, compelling herself, faced him. "You overwhelm me. I don't know what you will think of me," she faltered. "But I will tell you everything in a few words. After Stephen died I seemed to have nothing to do. For nearly six years I have been speculating on the Stock Exchange. I have lost all I had. I have lost nearly all, unknown to Steve, that his father left to him. And—and I'm at my wits' end—desperate." She drooped.

He rose, as if to go to her, and sat down again.

"How much is it—yours and Steve's?"

She whispered the appalling sum—and waited, downcast, for his exclamation. After what seemed a long silence, she stole a glance. He was sitting very still, his gaze on the window, looking apparently over the calm, blue sea towards Gibraltar.

"Poor Lady," he murmured, as if to himself.

"Luis, Luis," she cried, "be angry with me!"

He seemed to wake up, and turned to her with the ghost of a smile. "Why should I be angry?"

"I have shocked you—disgusted you!"

"No, no. But for the moment you have confounded me. Nearly all my life I have been hoping that some day you might need my service, and now that the day has come, the service is beyond me."

"Luis," she said quickly, "it seemed only right to tell you the whole truth; but, believe me, I should not have told you anything had I not been driven by the thought of Steve. Perhaps you feel that I ought to confess to Steve, but I think I'd rather—walk into the sea!"

"Hush!" The picture of her humbled before her son made him wince. Rightly or wrongly, she must be spared from drinking the dregs. "How much was Steve's fortune?" he asked.

At her answer he rose and went over to the window.

Minutes passed till she said nervously: "You must not think I am even dreaming of replacing it all at once. That would be too impossible. It's the fear of his suddenly asking, as he did the other day, for a fairly large sum that keeps me in torture. If I could only have sufficient, in the meantime, to carry on with, till my luck changes, as I feel sure——"

"No!" The note of firmness startled her; but next moment his tone was gentle. "Dear Lady, I am making no conditions. I only beg that you will not again put yourself at the mercy of your luck."

"But, Luis, how else——?"

"Let us talk of it calmly, and see what can be done." He returned to his seat. "May I have one of your English cigarettes?" He took one from the box at his elbow and lit it. "We know our liabilities," he went on almost cheerfully. "Let us consider our assets. They are, alas, insufficient by a long way. All in my house"—a smile—"will not nearly set things right for Steve; but"—seriously—"it is yours to——"

"Luis——"

"Calmly, Lady! As I told you, those useless ancient things which I have inherited are insured for two million pesetas. It may take a little time to realise them all, but I happen to know that there are covetous eyes on certain old masters, and we can count on a good round sum almost immediately. Give me, before I go, a note of your London bank, and the money shall be sent over on the day I get it. It should be not less than fifteen thousand pounds. Will that serve for the moment?"

Helplessly she nodded.

"I think I can arrange for most of the remainder within three months. It is for you to decide, but perhaps you should aim—for the sake of your peace of mind—at putting aside fifty thousand of the lot for Steve.—Not more, for you must think of yourself a little——"

"I can't have you do it!" she cried. "It is too generous. Apart from anything else, it will hurt your pride terribly——"

"Not a little bit! All this is a revelation to me of the meaning of things. All those ancient possessions were hoarded by my ancestors against this day; Providence planned for me to be the last of my line, so that I should be free to dispose of them; and, after all, there *was* a reason for my being a lonely little boy, three-and-twenty years ago."

"Oh, Luis!" Impulsively her hand went out.

He rose and took it.

"Whatever you do, Lady," he said, "you are not to cry. You must have faced things pretty bravely during those bad years," he continued, resuming his seat, "and now you must help me to face the future—boldly."

He took out the envelope containing the parchment and sat regarding it thoughtfully.

Lady Ballantyre fancied she heard him sigh. She felt a little faint. Was he, after all, really going to. . . .

"Perhaps," he said slowly, "Providence has something to do with this also. Perhaps the monk's message, too, has been waiting against this day. If one could but be absolutely certain of the existence of the jewels, the future would be bright enough." He looked at her. "Would it not, Lady?"

"You mean?"—breathlessly.

"I mean, if the jewels were yours——"

"Mine? But, Luis, you have already said——"

"What I have said I have unsaid. With the jewels in your hands, all would be well—and that is the answer to every question."

Surely she did not see the sadness in his smile.

"So now we come to business. Do you think your cousin would trust his fragment, or a photograph of it, to the post and to me; or ought I to go and see him?"

"But, Luis, are you quite sure?—about the Church, I mean." As if she did not know that his mind was made up!

"Quite sure. You allowed that it was a pretty notion, but now I have put away sentimental things."

There was a pause.

"I'm rather glad I had written that telegram before you came," she said, her inward emotion subsiding, though her voice fluttered.

"Why so?"

"Because it proves—does it not?—that I sought your help before I knew about the jewels."

"So it does, Lady, but I had not thought of it. May I help myself?" He took another cigarette. "Well, what about your cousin?"

Her colour was coming back; she was experiencing a not unpleasant reaction. The present was safe, the future less perilous.

"I hardly know what to say about Hector," she replied in something like her naturally confident tones. "He is far from being a mean man, but he is shrewd—not exactly suspicious—what we call 'canny.' You would need to approach him cautiously, Luis—not put all your cards on the table at once. Perhaps it might be better if I wrote to him in the first place, mentioning, in passing, that I have a friend who is a little more than ordinarily interested in the fragment and dagger—a Spanish friend, in fact, who might be able to tell him something about both. What do you think?"

"Excellent!"

"Then I will write to-night. Hector, of course, has heard of you. He is a tremendously hospitable person and will probably invite you on the spot to visit him. He has been making great alterations to his old cottage and is immensely proud of it. I shan't say anything about your coming with us in August. Steve, I'm afraid, has already told Ailsa about the *Miranda*."

"If an invitation comes, I shall accept it," said Luis. "Meanwhile I shall make certain that there are no more documents, ancient or modern, bearing on the subject. And now I suggest a turn in that lovely garden and a truce to——"

"Won't you tell me something about the jewels themselves?"

"No!" He smiled. "But if you will promise to be discreet, I may send you a copy of my father's notes about them. Only don't leave it lying about, to be picked up by some good Catholic——" He stopped abruptly, his bright look vanishing.

"You think there may still be people in Spain who know?"

"You never can tell. Things happen." He got up. "Will you come?"

She rose with an air of weariness. It had been a strain. "I feel so untidy. Excuse me for one minute," she said, and moved towards the bedroom.

At the door she halted and looked back, catching, ere it passed, the infinitely sorrowful expression of his eyes. Her heart misgave her. He had given all and asked for nothing.

"Luis, what can I say? How can I thank you?"

"By putting on your hat."

She smiled in spite of herself. "But, seriously, is there nothing——?"

The door from the corridor had opened.

"Hullo, Mother!"

Her son came in. He kissed her. "Hullo, Señor! This is good! But don't tell me it's to be the night train this time."

"Alas, yes. This has been a day off, but I'm on duty to-morrow. How was Gibraltar?"

"Not so bad, though I changed my mind about staying another night." Steve turned back to Lady Ballantyre. "I've brought over Captain Carruthers to dine and sleep. Come down to that courtyard place, where the birds fly around, when you're ready, won't you? And afterwards we'll have a jolly little dinner, the four of us. Oh, by the way, I want a cheque from you for——"

"Tell me about it later, dear, or leave a note of what you want on the table, there, and I'll bring it down to you."

"Oh, there's no desperate hurry. See you shortly, Señor."

"I'll come with you now," said Luis. "I think Lady Ballantyre wants to have a rest before dinner."

Left to herself, Lady Ballantyre went into her room and lay down. She did want a rest, and it was thoughtful of Luis to have said so, though odd his not having noticed her need before Steve's arrival. . . . And Luis had not asked for anything! She was not sure whether she was relieved or sorry. She closed her eyes, wondering if he would ever ask. But he was a dear! Never such a man! And if the jewels came true, she would, of course, repay him. Nor would she forget his Church. . . . But she must try not to think of it. She must relax her nerves. She had nearly two hours till dinner. A couple of aspirins. . . .

It was quite a merry little party, and Luis nearly missed his train. Only at the last moment came the chance of a private word with his hostess.

"I shall await your news of your cousin," he said. "Leave the rest to me, and be happy."

"Are *you* happy, Luis?" There was, perhaps, something wanton in the question.

"What a thing to ask a wretch who is about to spend the night on a slow train, without a sleeper! It is enough to make him talk Spanish! Lady, *adios*!"

The two young men accompanied him to the train, and Lady Ballantyre went up to her sitting-room: There she wrote a letter to Hector Maclean, at Tobermory, to be posted in the morning. She had meant also to write telegrams to her brokers, bidding them close all her commitments, cancelling, of course, her order of the afternoon, but the morrow, she remembered, was Saturday, so there was no hurry.

Then Steve came in for his cheque—a modest one—and noticed the Tobermory letter.

"No use posting that," he said. "I got a letter this evening from Ailsa. Her father was going over to spend a couple of months on the farm and bring her home in July. He will have sailed by now. I can give you the Canadian address."

"Not worth while. It was only a friendly line about nothing in particular." She tore the envelope across. "Good night, old boy. I'm sleepy."

Months of suspense!

VI.

On the second day following his visit to Algeciras, Luis, in his late father's study, was reading a letter just received from Lady Ballantyre. He sat at an ancient black walnut table, which bore, besides writing materials and reference books, a pair of very exquisite branched silver candlesticks, and an ebony crucifix, with a golden Christ. If he raised his eyes, they would rest on a large painting, the life-size portrait of a Spanish warrior of the sixteenth century, who gazed, with an oddly thoughtful look on his fierce face, at the dagger, known as a *misericorde*, in his hand. The rest of the wall-space was lined with books, many bound in parchment.

"Dear Luis"—ran the letter—

"It is only an hour since you left—I hate to think of your tiresome journey—and here am I writing to you. But there is already

news to send you, though not, alas, the news I could wish to send. Steve, who, as I feared, is in correspondence with Ailsa Maclean, has just told me that my cousin has sailed for Canada, to remain there till July, when he returns with the girl to Tobermory. So you will see that at the very outset we have come up against it, and it looks as though we should have to live in doubt till August. Hector, as I happen to know, keeps the fragment in his office safe. It is quite possible that Ronald Maclean, the young kinsman who will be in charge of things generally, may have the key; but, with all my eagerness to learn the truth, I can see that it *might* be unwise to apply to him. I might, however, write to Ronald, who was attentive to us last summer, and in a casual way ask him whether he can remember what was written on the fragment, which he has probably handled more than once. But even that might be risky. What do you think? I shall do exactly as you say. Steve, of course, must not know. Meantime, no more about that.

"I suppose a woman's spoken gratitude makes a man uncomfortable, if not unhappy, and I do not wish that you should be either. But I must tell you, dear Luis, before I go to bed—to sleep, as I have not slept for many, many months—that you have made life for me miraculously different, and I thank you with all my heart. If there is anything I might do for you—but, I suppose, there is nothing. Bless you, and good night.

"FLORA BALLANTYRE."

"No, there is nothing, dear Lady," thought Luis. "But I thank God for your cousin's absence, though it only puts off the evil day."

He had laid down the letter and was taking up a pen when the secretary came in. Gaspar Muñez was a man of somewhere between fifty and sixty, but his dark hair, which had receded half-way up the scalp, showed no tinge of grey, age showing itself in his dry, withered complexion and stringy throat. His teeth were perfect and his black eyes bright and quick as a bird's, though the simile is, perhaps, suggested by his small curved nose. Not a benevolent countenance, yet not an unpleasant one—at least, in repose. Luis had always disliked his smile. His tall, lean frame, invariably clad in black, betokened in action a certain wiry strength and alertness.

From a pad he detached a slip of paper and handed it to Luis. In neatly pencilled English Luis read:

"Two gentlemen—Madrid—response telegram yesterday."

Gaspar Muñez, placing himself in position, watched, waiting to read the answer on the other's lips.

"I did not expect them so soon," said Luis; "but let them come in."

With a look and gesture the secretary asked, "Here?"

Luis nodded, and when the secretary had gone out, lay back regarding the portrait. How long had it hung there? How many generations of de Laras had looked upon it, not, maybe, in admiration, but, surely in pride of possession? And now . . . Luis gave a shrug of resignation. What matter? Let it go! Evidently the gentlemen from Madrid were keen. Possibly they had clients in America. Luis was no adept in bargain-making; he detested haggling, whether the business involved ha'pence or hundreds; but he sought to harden himself now.

The visitors entered. Gaspar Muñez followed, and lingered, outwardly the attentive, disinterested secretary, inwardly a man tormented by curiosity. What boded those two hurried journeys to Algeciras, this visit of two strangers from Madrid? His eyes sought to learn what his ears could not. Then, at a sign from his employer, he bowed and retired to his little office next door. One may pity him. Even the facilities of eavesdropping were denied him.

His vigil near the slightly open door lasted more than two hours. Sensitive to most vibrations, he was aware when the three men left the study, and ready to spy as they went past his room. He surmised that Don Luis, instead of summoning a servant, was going to honour the strangers by escorting them to the *patio*, or, perhaps, on a tour of the old house.

From his desk he took some papers, about which he might reasonably, if necessary, ask his employer a question, and passed to the study. But if he hoped there to find anything to indicate the nature of the recent business, he was fated to be disappointed. He found, however, something that added to his curiosity—Lady Ballantyre's letter. He read it twice and replaced it on the blotter exactly as it had been when he first saw it. Who was this woman at Algeciras? He seemed to have read the name, not so long ago, on the lips of Don Luis, or of his father, or, it might have been, of both.

But who was she, and what was she to Don Luis, and what had he done for her to earn her gratitude on that latest flying visit? Also, this fragment — obviously of some important document—at Tobermory—what was it? Tobermory? Why, surely. . . .

He went over to the large safe set into the book-shelves at the far end of the long room, wherein were stored the more precious manuscripts, family documents and writings of his late employer. He had always been trusted with one of the two keys; indeed, the rearranging of the contents, some years ago, had been the work of his own hands, and the old de Lara had complimented him upon his method. Lately the young de Lara, as was his filial duty, had shown an interest in the contents and had sought enlightenment upon some of them; but if he had come upon any papers relating to Tobermory, he had not mentioned them. . . . But, stay, had he not asked a question about—— ?

Hitherto Gaspar Muñez had not been particularly interested in the Tobermory papers, but now his hand went eagerly to the compartment in which he knew they were to be found. He drew out the tape-tied bundle of manuscript and typescript—the latter his own work—and looked for the long blue envelope which should have accompanied it. The blue envelope was not there, but a white Manila one, with pencil jottings on it, was in its place, and contained the familiar enough sheet of parchment, over which, long ago, he and the old de Lara had spent many a late hour. Muñez remembered that more than once he had suggested a visit to Tobermory, and while his employer had not discouraged, he had never been ready to act upon, the idea.

But why the white envelope? Muñez examined it. The flap had been fastened, but very lightly; the tough paper was ever so slightly soiled; and the bottom corners were crumpled. The envelope had been carried in a pocket, and for that purpose Don Luis had discarded the rather flimsy blue covering. But why had Don Luis taken, as seemed so likely, that old parchment on his trip to Algeciras? And why—— ?

The minutes were passing. Muñez replaced the bundle, locked up the safe and went back to his office. As he was closing the door he spied Don Luis coming back from the *patio*. He sat down at his desk and wondered. . . .

Beside the inkstand was a little green bulb on a stand. Suddenly it glowed strongly. The light was his summons to the study. He snapped a switch and obeyed.

Luis, at the writing-table, waved his hand towards the portrait.

"It is sold," he said, as Muñez attentively watched his lips. "Men will come for it on Tuesday morning. You will give them facilities and your personal assistance, if required. And we must find something to cover the blank wall."

There was something pathetic in the sight of the mute, open mouth. The man was staggered, and Luis was touched.

"I am sorry, Gaspar. I can understand your being shocked. But I had better tell you at once that I intend to sell many other things immediately. . . . But that is all for the present."

Muñez seemed to relax. His stricken look passed. He bowed and went out.

Luis took up Lady Ballantyre's letter, but his eyes strayed back to the portrait. In his gaze was no bitterness, only sadness. "Why should I feel it as though I were a Castilian?" he thought. "What have I to do with Spanish pride?"

In the next room Gaspar Muñez cursed with all his soul the son of the man he had served, and almost loved, for more than twenty years. For it was borne upon him that the son was, sooner or later, going to take from him all that the father had given —money, occupation, ease and, above everything, a refuge that was more than a home. He could not doubt that this Flora Ballantyre had received money from Don Luis, and was about to receive much more. For his own sake, Don Luis would not have sold the portrait, nor determined to sell other heirlooms. And since the thing was done for a woman's sake, it was only a question of time, so argued Muñez, till everything should be sold, and the ancient house become the abode of a pauper! Then he, Gaspar, would be dismissed, not penniless by any means, nor helpless, because of his affliction, but denuded of that cloak of respectability so useful to one who, secretly, for years, had been chief proprietor of a gaming-house and also, appropriately enough, of a money-lending business. Despite his infirmity, Muñez was not altogether a recluse. He had regular meetings, occasionally of a social nature, with his partners, of whom at least two were men of some education. They took instructions from his fingers, admired his astuteness, while fearing those



"The man was staggered, and Luis was touched. 'I am sorry, Gasper. But I had better tell you at once that I intend to sell many other things immediately.'"

quick, bright eyes of his, and regarded him as a sort of oracle. Like him, they desired money continually; unlike him, they desired money to spend.

Always, in greater or less degree, Muñez had resented the existence of Luis, whom he had met for the first time two years ago. But for that boy in England yonder, he had told himself a hundred times, he might have hoped to become something more than a hired servant to the lonely man who had lifted him from his miserable position of general drudge in the Toledo museum into the honourable one of secretary to a *savant*, and a life luxurious. He had, indeed, hoped greatly during the War; nor had he quite despaired till the father's illness brought the son home to stay. But now, and just when the gaming establishment was doing rather badly, the son had as good as given him notice to quit, and the old resentment was fanned into sheer hate. Luis de Lara, son of his benefactor, was his enemy!

Yet cursing was vain; hatred, too, was vain, unless put into action. He must walk warily, continue to dissemble, be diligent and faithful in outward service. And he must find out more about this Flora Ballantyre and—for the moment he had forgotten!—and discover the significance to her and Don Luis of that parchment in the safe and that fragment in Tobermory.

The green bulb glowed. Muñez snapped the switch, wiped his face, took up his jotting-pad, and passed dutifully to the study.

A week later, a letter from Lady Ballantyre told Luis—and, incidentally, his secretary—of her impending return to London. It did not in so many words beg him to make another visit to Algeciras, but the appeal was there. Luis saw, or sensed, it, and for an hour hesitated. It was as though her dear hand had touched him tenderly, more tenderly than in all those three-and-twenty years. He wanted to go to her, fall on his knees at her chair and, though she were cold and laughed at him, take her in his arms and tell her he loved her.

But he wrote briefly that he did not hope to see her before August, and that the equivalent of £17,000 had that day been remitted to her bank in London—an item of considerable interest to Gaspar Muñez. Thereafter Luis applied himself to the affairs of his father which still remained to be settled, to searching—without success, as it turned out—for further knowledge concerning the Tobermory treasure, and to the disposal of other treasures of his own. Naturally, he had a good deal of correspondence with Lady Ballantyre, most of which Muñez, who would seem to have had a special talent for temporarily opening other people's letters, enjoyed in a fashion.

In London Lady Ballantyre, Steve having gone back to Oxford, settled down, as well as her mind would let her, to wait for August—also for "Flossies" to go up.

A further instalment of "Gambler's Hope" will appear next month.

POPPY-RED HATS.

THE sky is so grey and the days are so dreary
That anything bright is a pleasure to see;
Of drab mackintoshes we all are so weary
That a poppy-red hat is a tonic to me.

Some wear a sea-blue mackintosh to go out in,
And others a red, or a green, or a brown;
But the poppy-red hats are all bobbing about in
The streets of our grey little slumbering town.

A mackintosh cannot be aught but depressing,
Be never so changing its wonderful hue,
So it's me for the poppy-red, poppy-red blessing
That speaks of the summer and skies that are blue.

NORTHAM WITCHELL.

THE MAKING OF A RUGBY INTERNATIONAL

By LEONARD R. TOSSWILL

(*English International and Editor of "Football: The Rugby Union Game"*)

ILLUSTRATED BY H. F. CROWTHER SMITH

IT is sometimes said that a great Rugby player, like a great artist, is born, not made—and with about as much truth, for while the great artist must have born within him the divine spark, yet it is only when the spark is kindled by the "infinite capacity for taking pains" that it grows into a flame which can be seen by the world.

Probably no Rugby player, however famous, would ever lay claim to equality with a great artist, or to the possession of anything so embarrassing as a divine spark; but it is none the less true that he must be born with one thing at least—*the will to succeed*, and, equally, this must be reinforced by endless practice. Many of those who hold the most important positions on the Rugby Roll of Fame might never have achieved greatness if they had not themselves taken the trouble to become perfect in the various arts of the game.

We all admire the ease with which a distinguished player takes his passes, swerves past his opponents, or drops a goal from an apparently impossible angle, but that ease is not due to any intrinsic quality—it is the result of hours of dull, monotonous practice. If any candidate for International honours imagines that he can attain his object without effort, it would be wise for him to get rid of the notion at once, no matter how great his natural aptitude for this or other games may be.

There is a story told of a certain distinguished player of various games who took up Rugger comparatively late in life. Up to a point he was successful and gained a fair reputation in club games. Then came an occasion when he was given a place in an International trial game. To his own great surprise apparently, he was an utter failure and proved to be quite at sea when opposed by players of greater experience. After the match was over he was overheard remarking to a friend in a puzzled voice that there seemed to be more in this game than he had imagined! It is only fair to add that he applied his talents to acquiring a sound knowledge of the game and eventually became a regular member of his country's team.

It is true that an element of luck, rather than merit, has entered into the selection of certain individuals for International caps, and there are tales of men being chosen through their being mistaken for others wearing similar jerseys in trial games, or through the selectors being muddled over the initials of two men of the same name. Such stories should be taken with a liberal pinch of salt, and ambitious youngsters would be unwise to build unduly on such accidents or coincidences, for even Arthur Young disguised in the jersey of Wakefield would have little chance of being selected to lead England's forwards!

In Rugby football it might be said that there's many a slip twixt the *cap* and the lip, and even when a man has been chosen to play for his country and his name has been published as one of the team, it does not follow that he will play. The most striking instance of this occurred at Swansea some years ago, when a certain man was selected to play for England against Wales, travelled down to Swansea, changed, and was photographed with his colleagues, only to be told at the last minute that another player would take his place owing to the state of the ground. Hard luck indeed!

Fortunately his chance came later and he gained his cap on another occasion.

The two important stages of a Rugby player's career are schooldays and the years immediately following this period. Very few boys have had the honour of representing their country while still at school, though there have been notable exceptions in Scotland and one, J. G. Milton, in England. It is difficult to say which of these two stages is the more important, for so much depends on the rapidity of development of the particular individual. Some, like John Daniell, develop early and are strong enough when they leave school to go straight into a first-class team and compete with much older players on level terms. Others, like "Curly" Hammond, are much longer in reaching their best. Daniell was twenty when he gained his first International cap, Hammond was twenty-six.



The selectors watch for signs of Rugger genius almost from the cradle (as we see Admiral P. M. R. Royds doing here).

On the whole, the training gained at school is probably the more important of the two, for that is the most impressionable age, when body and mind are most agile. In the early days of Rugby it was the exception for anyone to become an International who had not been to one of the Rugby-playing public schools, still the great nurseries of the game. But nowadays it is very different, and many of the most distinguished players of recent years have not been educated at a recognised public school. The great advantage that a public school boy has over another is that he has probably been taught the elements of the game by a famous old player, for most of the well-known schools have one on their staff as "games master." Also the advantage of starting one's football career in an institution saturated in the traditions of the game, with a distinguished record of achievement and a long list of Internationals to its credit, is not to be despised. All the same, there are plenty of examples of men who started without any such advantages and yet learned to "play the game" in every sense of that phrase just as well as their more fortunate colleagues.

Wherever a boy goes to school, it is, I think, desirable that he should learn the Association game before he embarks on his Rugby career; that is, he should learn to use his feet before he begins to handle the ball. The boy who learns to dribble a round ball in the first place will find it far easier to acquire the more difficult art of dribbling an oval ball than one who plays Rugby from the beginning. Also, for very young boys, Association is a more suitable game than one which includes scrummaging and collaring, with their inherent danger to soft muscles and immature bones.

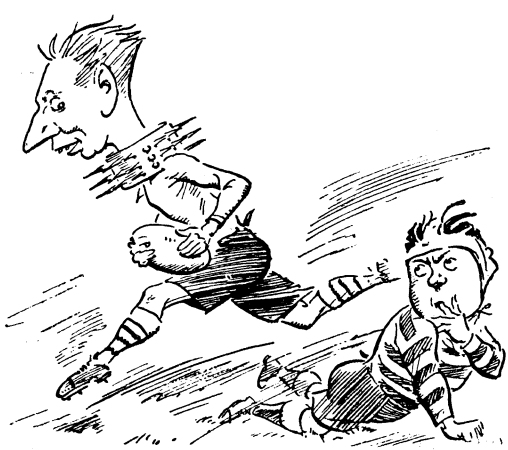
Whether the embryo footballer begins by playing "rugger" or "soccer," he will have to learn the first essential of all ball games, to *keep his eye on the ball.* He will also learn to run and dodge; he will get an inkling of what is meant by combination and the team spirit; he will learn to use hand, foot and eye in perfect harmony.

While on the subject of schooldays, it is necessary to give a word of warning concerning specialisation at too early a stage of a boy's career. The modern game has become so complicated and fast that players find it necessary to devote far more attention to learning special positions and special phases of play than their predecessors had any need to do. Formerly, a boy became a forward or a back according to whether he

was big and heavy, or light and fast. Now, every forward has his fixed place in the pack, and it is quite usual for a man to be selected because he is a good "second-row forward," a good "hooker," or "wing-forward." Moreover, a modern forward has to be nearly, if not quite, as speedy as a three-quarter.

It is not unnatural, therefore, that, even in school football, there should be a tendency for coaches and the boys themselves to train individuals to fill a particular place in the field, or to concentrate on one phase of the game. This is, I am sure, a great mistake, for no boy will ever develop into a really good player unless he has a sound knowledge of the game as a whole, and has learned to appreciate the difficulties and possibilities of every position and every aspect of the game. Also it must be remembered that many famous players only found their true *métier* comparatively late in their careers. Arthur Gould gained his first International cap as a full-back, but it was as a centre three-quarter, one of the greatest of all time, that he made his name. Several famous forwards began as three-quarters, while Eddie Myers played first for England as a centre three-quarter, and it was not until W. J. A. Davies retired that he got his chance as stand-off half.

Let me urge the young player, then, to take every opportunity he can get during the early part of his career to play in positions to which he is unaccustomed; he will never regret the experience of seeing the game from "the other fellow's" point of view. Of course there are, and always will be, a few who seem cut out for certain places from the very beginning. I believe W. J. A.



Prickly neck-wear device to teach the budding International not to tackle high.



Arthur Young disguised in the jersey of Wakefield.

Davies has confessed that he only played forward once in his life—and that was not a success!—but don't assume because you score a few tries at school that you are a future C. N. Lowe, much less that because you have some success as a wing-forward that you can imitate Tom Voyce; we only get players of their type once or twice in a generation.

In determining the most suitable position for a boy to play in, mental attributes should be considered more than physical. A back *must* have a quick brain, so if a boy is a little slow in the uptake, he had better go into the pack, where the need for quick *individual* action is not so imperative as outside the scrummage. A special aptitude for kicking, that is, punting and drop-kicking, is an indication for a position in the back division, where there are more opportunities for the exploitation of this particular art. All the same, drop-kicking may be very useful to a forward, and I wonder how many points were scored for Devonshire and the Harlequins respectively by Charlie Thomas and G. D. Roberts with their wonderful facility in dropping goals.

The ability to take and give passes cleanly and accurately is of course a necessity for all good players, whatever their positions; but it is so essential in a three-quarter and

half that unusual skill in this province is again an indication for a place among the backs.

Place-kicking is a thing apart. My advice to all ambitious youngsters is to concentrate on this art, for to have the reputation of being an accurate place-kicker is the surest road to advancement at the present day. The splendid kicking of J. V. Richardson in the England match with the Waratahs was the principal factor in the English success and more than justified this player's selection, apart from his other claims. Place-kicking is almost entirely a matter of practice, and I believe any boy could make himself



Patent blinkers to hide the magnetic attraction of the touch-line from the young three-quarter and to make him run straight.

into a first-class place-kicker if he would only take the trouble to spend all his spare time in practising kicking in every sort of condition and from every angle. It is difficult to understand why so few players have realised this; it is certainly a fact that the number of really good kickers in any country can be counted on two hands, if not on one.

Another phase that is well worth the careful study of young players is tackling, whatever position they occupy. "Aim high" is a fine principle in most things, and certainly in Rugby football, but *not* in tackling! For one thing, if you aim too high in trying to collar a man, you will come to earth with a bump even quicker than your captain's winged words can reach you. The whole art of tackling may be summed up in "go hard and low," and, particularly, go *hard*. Looked at from the lowest point of view, going hard for your man minimises the chances of your hurting yourself and enables the lightest man to bring down his sturdiest opponent. You must remember that a man who is running is far easier to upset than a man who is standing still; by going for your man hard, you run the best chance of upsetting his balance and bringing him down, and no tackle is successful unless you *do* bring him down. If you can secure man and ball together, so much the better, but the first need is to bring the man down; at least he will not find it easy to pass if he comes down hard. These points may seem elementary when describing the process of making an International, but they are very important all the same, and not even the most brilliant player can afford to neglect them; there are men playing to-day who would represent their countries time after time were it not that there is an idea, right or wrong, that they are unreliable tacklers.

I wrote earlier of the two principal stages in a Rugger player's career; up to now I have dealt mainly with the first, or school, period. Now for the second. When a boy leaves school, somewhere about the age of seventeen, or earlier, he is at his most active age, but he is not fully grown usually and of course has not attained his full strength. For a time, then, he is at a disadvantage when taking his place in an ordinary club team. Of course, if he goes to a University he has to compete with others of his own age, or a little older, and is able to develop his powers in an ideal environment. At a place like Oxford or Cambridge a promising boy meets the pick of the athletes from other schools on level terms, and, in addition, has the privilege—if he is tried in the 'Varsity side—of playing against the cream of the first-class clubs in London, the provinces, and other countries.

It has always seemed to me that the boy who is lucky enough to go to a Rugger-playing public school, and then on to Oxford or Cambridge, has a better chance than any other of gaining his International cap; not only for the reasons given above, but also because he is necessarily continually under the eye of the leading critics, selectors, and others, who can have a good deal of influence on the progress of his future career. For such a boy the path to the highest honours

is a comparatively easy one; if he has the right stuff in him, he will assuredly "get there" in the end, and there is no danger of his merits being overlooked.

How different is the case, however, of the boy who has to go into some trade or office when he leaves school. In the first place, he cannot lead so healthy a life as the 'Varsity man; he has less time in which to train; his work probably takes more out of him than is the case with an ordinary university curriculum; he may never be able to play more than once a week, and any practice he gets must be undertaken either before or after his day's work, neither of them ideal times for the purpose. In the next place, the majority of those with whom he plays are stronger and more experienced than himself, but it does not follow that they will teach him much that is useful. This brings me to the next point, the club that he joins. Of course there may be little choice in the matter, for he may live in some provincial town where only one or two clubs exist. If he lives in a place like London there are plenty of clubs available, but if he joins one of the leading clubs he will have to be content with playing for one of the junior teams. On the other hand, if he joins one of the lower grade clubs, he may play for the first XV straight away, but he may never get beyond that stage, for the teams against which he will play will be of the same category, and he will seldom get the opportunity of seeing first-class players or of being pitted against them.

On the whole, I believe in a boy joining the very best club to which he can gain admittance. Even if he has to wait for his chance, it will surely come in the end. A word, however, as to Old Boy clubs. It has always been a disputed point whether a boy ought to play for his old school club in preference to another with a bigger reputation, and there has been a good deal of feeling in the past concerning the "poaching" by some famous clubs of promising youngsters from the Old Boy organisations. Each individual must decide the question for himself; but at least it must be said that the Old Boy clubs have a very strong claim on those who have learned the game at their school, and it may be pointed out also that very many Internationals have been selected from the ranks of such clubs, even though they were not so strong as, say, Blackheath or the Harlequins. Among those who have played for England or been selected for a Trial recently one might quote R. Cove Smith, K. J. Stark, and R. S. Spong as instances of "Old Boys."

Whatever club he plays for, the would-be International should take every opportunity of seeing the best class of games. Not that the football to be seen in International and Trial games is always of the highest class—sometimes it is the reverse—but at least there is always something to be gained by watching players good enough to take part in such matches. Their methods should be



A player trying to drape himself in the remains of his pants will tickle the humour of any crowd.

studied closely but critically, and a young player should ask himself what *he* would have done in similar circumstances, and secondly, whether a third course might not have been still better. Personally, I think more can be learned by watching the 'Varsity match, or the Navy *v.* Army match, than from most Trial or International games. Also such games as those between Bristol, Newport, Cardiff, Leicester, and the leading London clubs or Universities are usually well worth watching, if only for the different methods employed by the two sides.

And now a last word to all who wish to wear the Rose, the Thistle, the Shamrock or the Plumes. Never be tempted to "play to the gallery." You will sometimes hear a bit of unnecessarily rough play or a doubtful trick applauded by some of the spectators. Don't imagine that such tactics "cut any ice" with those who know—and matter. We all know the man who is brilliant in the short line-out—and nowhere else—the man who is very energetic when play is in front of the Grand Stand but slacks off on the far side of the field; he deceives nobody really and will never get any farther. Also don't try to make one of your opponents look foolish. It may be easy to make the crowd laugh, as may be seen by the ease with which the spectacle of a player trying to drape himself hurriedly in the remains of his pants will tickle the humour of any crowd, but it does not do you any good and will be remembered against you.

Rugby football is sometimes called a hard game. So it is, and so is every game that is worth playing, and the harder you train, the harder you tackle and follow up, and, above all, the harder you practise, the sooner you will achieve your ambition and become an "International."

THE LITTLE FIR.

A LITTLE Fir-tree stood in the drifted snow,
And watched the drear eves come and go:

"Here stand I, all in a green gown,
Moon-beam, star-ray weave my crown!"

The little Fir stood in the mossy ling
And saw the twilight lengthening:

"Here stand I, all in a green gown,
Girdled with fir-cones, russet, rose and brown!"

Stands she still in the bracken-fern,
Whilst the February days return:

"Here stand I, all in a green gown,
Golden sunshine round me thrown!

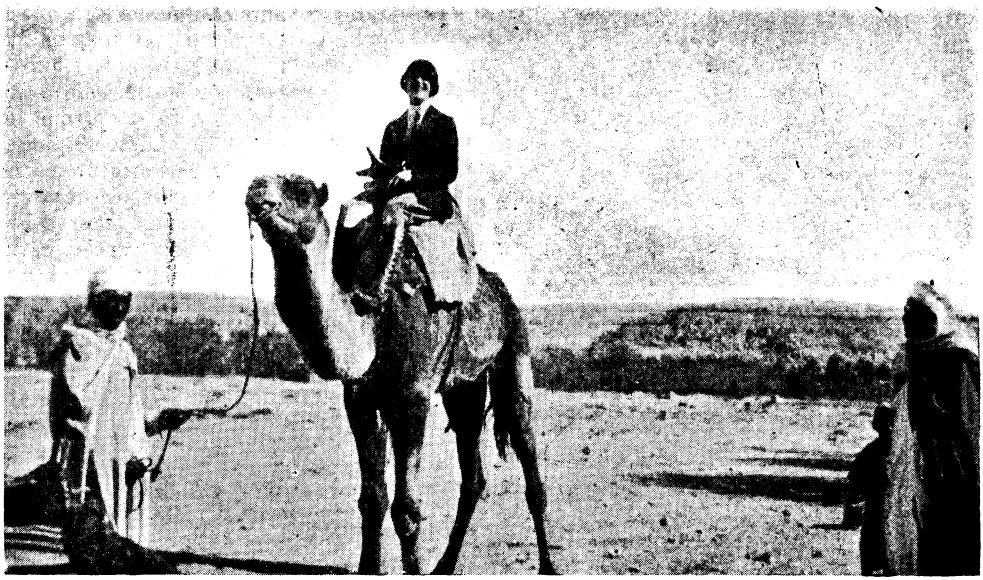
Rime and raindrops 'thwart my stem,
Sewn like pearls around my garment's hem!

Laughter of the woodbirds ripples round me now
Whilst the happy moments come and go."

And blessed be all they who stand and wait,
The poor in heart, the lone, the desolate,

Till snow and frost and flood abate
And April opens her emerald gate!

ALICE E. GILLINGTON.



IN THE SAHARA.

THE HUMAN SIDE OF EXPLORING

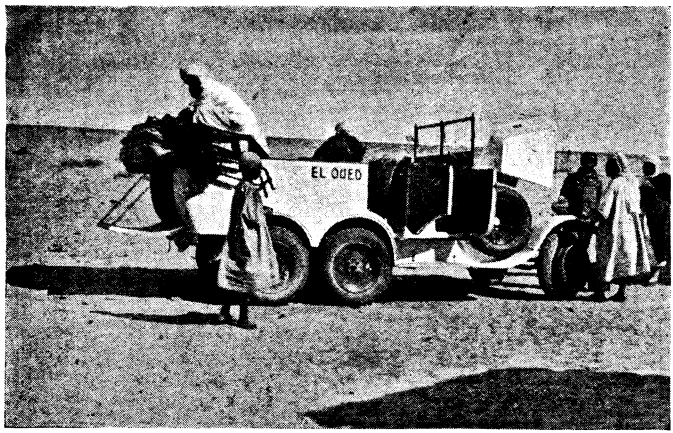
By LADY DOROTHY MILLS

Photographs by the Author

THE words "explorer" and "exploration" are used very freely nowadays in connection with the travels, scientific or merely spectacular, of a great many people. In reality the title of "explorer" is one that has become almost extinct in its original sense, meaning a person who travelled in, or actually discovered, a country or tract of land hitherto unknown by experience, or even by hearsay, to civilised man. For it is to be doubted if such a place, of any magnitude, still exists.

"Exploration" in the old days was a grand and romantic word standing for grand and romantic things. A man, without data, or any of the resources of modern knowledge and science, set sail across oceans that, as far as he or anyone else knew, fell over the edge of the world, and proceeded across continents hitherto unimagined, without the foggiest notion of where or to what he might be going, or how or whether he would ever be able to return. Whatever happened, there was no help for him save in his own resourcefulness and endurance. Nowadays, with our modern equipment, advance knowledge and facilities of communication, we have dropped from the sublime to the practical, and exploration is summed up by its definition in the present-day dictionary: "To search by any means; to inquire into with care."

Such as it is, however, humanly as well as scientifically speaking, exploring is a most entrancing hobby. It is more than the gratification of the Wanderlust, the spirit of discovery, or the pursuit of a scientific objective. It is rather the spirit of the



THE SIX-WHEEL CAR THAT IS REPLACING THE CAMEL.

collector. Some people collect *objets d'art*, or love affairs, or race-horses, but the acquisition of none of these gives greater thrill, I'll swear, than the discovery of an unknown tribe, or a new oasis, or the right to trace a new name on a map. One gloats over such an addition to one's collection in a spirit of sheer personal possession, tempered with a sneaking and selfish regret that, within a few years, it will be public property to a world of engineers, scientists and writers, and eventually to all the paraphernalia of tourist agencies.

However healthy a love one may have of civilisation and its flesh-pots, the best thrill of the year is when one leaves them all behind, and sets off for the unknown, with a lot of lumpy luggage that contains hardly any clothes at all. The thrill increases till the last vestige of civilisation is gone and one is at grips with the Unknown. There it comes to earth and settles into the hard absorbing fight with primitive conditions; with the problems of health and climate and transport, with the daily struggle for food, water and shelter, and the groping after understanding of the strange and sometimes antagonistic people one is among. All the complexities of life disappear, and one is reduced to the state, mental and physical, of a healthy animal. As long as one's "tummy" is reasonably full, and there is a prospect of somewhere safe and dry to sleep, one is perfectly, almost stupidly, happy. The creature comforts no longer matter. For the first few days one misses one's bath most terribly, but in a short time, I am ashamed to say, one doesn't mind if one never has a bath again! Cleanliness may be next to godliness, but in the wilds it comes a long way after food and sleep, or even a good camel!

It is hard to say what makes the thrill of exploring. The road calls and one must follow it—that is all. It is a strange thing, the power of the road, known only to the born nomad, and it has the power to make otherwise sensible persons do unaccountable things. Personally, sometimes, when I have been obliged to turn my back on a road that for weeks or months I have been travelling, it has given me a queer, almost physical, pain, and it seems as if I can't turn back, that I must go on and on till I slip over the edge of the horizon.

But exploration, like any other hobby, has its little heartaches. It has been said that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. The little knowledge of the great world possessed nowadays by most people has induced, in a large section of the public, a



IN A WEST AFRICAN VILLAGE.

blasé appetite that is only titillated by sensationalism, and to the sincere traveller it is as painful to have to trim his or her work with sensationalism as it would be for an art-lover to powder the nose of his Praxiteles. "Give us adventure!" cries our public, in spite of the fact, if the truth were known, that adventure, in the sense they mean, is usually merely the result of one's own ineptitude.

Personally I prefer the somewhat wanton indifference of some people to the personal fate of the explorer. Some time ago I had planned a trip—which incidentally never came off—into the heart of Tartary, a trip entailing an appreciable amount of uncertainty and risk, and my agent was trying to persuade a certain Sunday newspaper to commission the "story" for a considerable sum. The Sunday newspaper was dubious, saying that the journey was a dangerous one and that I mightn't go through with it.

"Oh," said my agent, thinking to do me a good turn, "she'll go through with it all right, even if she gets killed over it."

"There you are," said the Sunday newspaper. "If she gets killed, where's our story?"

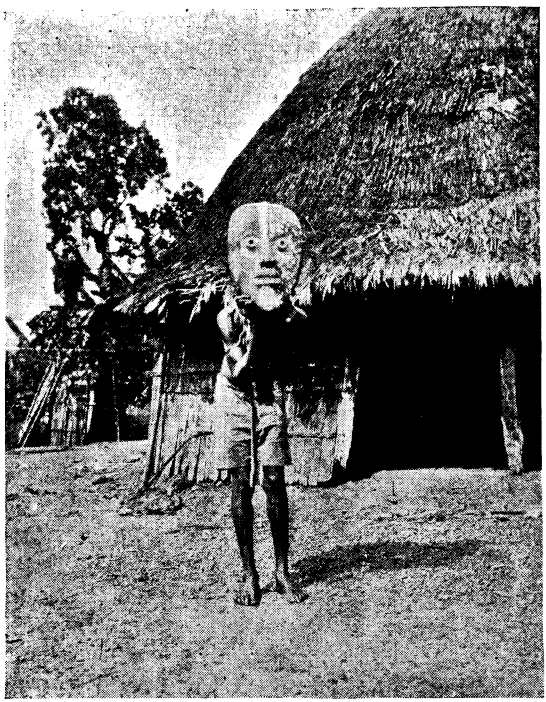
"Why, that's a story in itself," answered my agent. "Earl's daughter killed by Tartar hordes. Can't you see it?"

"But," said the Sunday newspaper, pathetically, "of course it's a marvellous story. But she's going alone, and there'll be no one to take the photographs. *Where's our story?*"



Photo by] [*Lassalle.*

LADY DOROTHY MILLS IN ARAB COSTUME.



MASK WORN BY "DEVIL-BUSH" WITCH-DOCTORS, WEST AFRICA.

And I never got that commission!

Some people use the word explorer with capital letters, so to speak, seeming to visualise him or her as some kind of splendid impersonal being, in a superb stage setting, who is never ill or tired, fractious or frightened. I don't know about other people, but, personally, I am often all of these things, sometimes all of them at the same time! A sense of satisfaction and gratification may come later, but the moment of achievement is often obscured in the most prosaic way because one is hungry or "done," because one's head aches, or one's feet hurt. For days and weeks before I reached Timbuktu, I had dreamt of the moment when I should first set eyes on that legendary, mysterious city, but when that moment came my eyes were so shut up with mosquito bites that I could scarcely tell it from Piccadilly Circus. On another occasion, after a most gruelling trip in the face of everything uncomfortable that a desert can provide, when at last I reached the goal of my ambitions I didn't see it at all, for I had fallen asleep from sheer exhaustion.

Not the least attractive aspect of travelling is the frequent touch of nature that makes the whole world seem so very much akin. The rough places of the earth bring out all the humanity and chivalry there is in man, however rough, and I have received more altruistic kindness from people who probably hadn't had a bath for years, if ever, who looked as if they would cut my throat for fourpence, than I ever have from my civilised fellows. One stumbles against the most fascinating and unexpected people tucked away in odd corners of the earth, from ex-royalties to gaol-birds, and I have made a diversity of most incongruous friends of all shapes, sizes, and colours, whom I simply adore, and who occasionally, after many moons, come and call on me in London, to the acute embarrassment of my parlour-maid.



A WEST AFRICAN KING.

Luckily, they do not all keep their promises. A few years ago a very splendid Arab of the Western Sahara told me that he proposed to visit England on purpose to see me, adding that he would bring me a beautiful present.

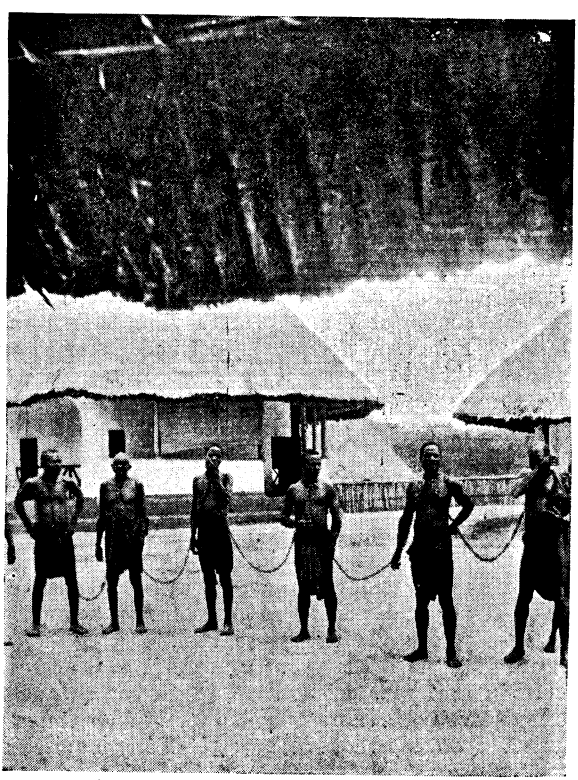
"That will be lovely," I said. "What will you bring me?"

"You told me you had no sheep," he said magnificently. "I will bring you a flock of fifty sheep."

Now, of course, to the desert Arab's way of thinking, a flock of sheep represents the handsomest and most expensive present any gentleman could bring a lady, but it was only later that I remembered I had given him the address of my club in Grosvenor Street, and for months I was haunted by doubts as to how even the haughty and statesman-like *savoir faire* of the hall porter would cope with fifty sheep bleating outside our dignified doors.



"TEACUP," THE AUTHOR'S DEVOTED GUIDE ON THE LIBERIAN TRIP.



"LEOPARD MEN" OF LIBERIA.
They are undergoing penal servitude for cannibalism.

I suppose it is because in the wild places there is no place for superfluities or meretricious sentiment that the friendships one forms in them, however incongruous, are real and lasting. Whereas here in civilisation people are apt to forget one in a very short time, it makes me happy to know that, even, maybe, after a lapse of years, I am sure of a warm welcome in more than one mud hut or goat-skin tent in the wilds of Africa and Asia.

A question I am often asked is what the people think of me in the places where I travel. Well, in places where white people have been rarely seen, and in the semi-civilised places, a solitary woman is always a bit of a mystery. In Asia Minor I have, with uncomfortable results, been taken for a spy. In the Northern Sahara I am generally taken to be a cinema artiste, when I am not assessed as a female commercial traveller. I have been taken for a cocotte in more than one rather dubious hotel in various parts of the world. Among



AN ARAB MARRIAGE "FANTASIA."

the simple savages of the West African coast I am generally accounted for as a missionary, which frankly does not flatter me. In the real back blocks of Africa, where in many places the inhabitants have never seen a white man, let alone a white woman, I am just considered "white" and therefore a mystery, a fabulous being without age or sex, or any real meaning. In such places men, women, and children used to run and hide in the bush till I had passed, and in one little village, at the back of the Guinea Coast, they seemed to think I was a djinn, or spirit of some kind, and hung garlands of flowers over me to keep me in a good temper.

But one is not always so graciously considered. Among the officials of most countries, and especially the British, who take their responsibilities very seriously, the inquiring traveller, especially a woman, is merely considered a nuisance, to be got rid of as expeditiously as possible. Their viewpoint may be pretty accurately summed up in a remark made to me some time ago by a very cross Government official of the Middle East who had caught me wandering, without a permit, in forbidden territory where a most entertaining little guerilla war was going on.

"*We* don't mind what happens to you," he said. "But if you get killed or anything, we are obliged to send out a punitive force that costs our Government a lot of time and money which, frankly speaking, you're not worth."

Certainly the explorer, as a rule, is utterly without honour in the country he, or especially she, sojourns in. Primitive man, whose ideal is a stationary idleness, cannot see any reason or worthy motive in scouring strange countries when one might remain comfortably and peacefully in one's own. Primitive woman, in particular, considers that to do so there must be something very wrong with one somewhere. An old Touareg woman once asked me—among a number of very intimate questions—whether my husband loved me. On my answering in the affirmative, she shook her head dubiously.

"If he truly loved you, he would not sit in his tent while you went forth roaming," she said, adding as an afterthought, "also you would not be so thin."

"Is it that your country is evil, or is it that your people have driven you out, that you should make a journey of many moons to come here?" sympathetically inquired a negro chief of the Niger country.

Perhaps the vague suspicion attached to the personality of a woman explorer is due

to the generally preconceived conception of her.

"Why, you don't look in the least like an explorer," exclaimed a journalist on coming to interview me at a foreign port. On inquiry I gathered that she had been expecting a large square-jawed female flourishing a revolver, and it took some time to convince her that a hobby for tramping strange countries is not incompatible with a normal feminine interest in frocks and face-powder.

I have called exploration a hobby. It is apt to become a deep-rooted one. As the collector in time becomes insatiate so does the ardent traveller, to whom a chance phrase, or perhaps merely the sight of a queer name on a map, will conjure up an irresistible longing to set forth into the blue and add a new portion of the earth's surface to his collection. And as a hobby it has points that make it less satisfactory in the long run than other hobbies. It is not compatible with advancing years; one has to give it up when the ability leaves one to sleep anywhere, to eat and drink things that a jackal would turn up its nose at, or to do without either food or sleep, when one cannot thrive on a twenty-four-hours' day.

I suppose most of us dread old age. Personally I dread it most, not for the usual reasons of woman, nor because of wrinkles, or rheumatism, or adipose tissue, not because one day I shall have to wear false teeth and false hair, but because the great wild world will no longer be my stamping-ground, because I shall have to sit in my arm-chair in England, and merely read the accounts of other people's travels.

JONES'S SHOP.

I GATHER with humans here and there
From clattering town to country fair.
I grumble and grin and swear and joke
Like any and every kind of folk.
I listen and learn and look and see,
And most of the world is friends with me;
But some of the best are those who stop
And sit in the queue at Jones's shop.

For whether the goodly atmosphere
Of scissors and soap can bring such cheer,
Or whether it means a simple clip
Is full of the germs of comradeship
I never can tell, but peace is there
And never deserts the barber's chair.
Ah, happy the day I get my crop
And sit in the queue at Jones's shop!

The people I meet in bus or train
Will mutter and scan the news again;
The people I meet in my hotel
Are pleasant enough, but all unwell;
The people who ask me round to tea
Are never a sparkling company;
And nobody smiles like those who stop
And sit in the queue at Jones's shop.

G. D. MARTINEAU.

SUGGIA

A PERSONAL STUDY OF THE GREAT 'CELLIST

By WATSON LYLE

THE voice of the violoncello is the most poignantly human sound produced by any of the stringed instruments—the violin, viola, violoncello, and double-bass. One readily grants that a fine violin, finely played, has a human tone-quality until it soars to altitudes too supernal, if still lovely, for the mental ear to discover any analogy to it, even in the ranks of *coloratura soprani*. The viola, which is usually assigned the tenor voice in the quartet of strings, is too sadly sweet to bear comparison with any voice of normal humanity, while the gruff tones of the double-bass are only referable to the guffaws of some over-done Falstaff. But when the voice of the 'cello is evoked by the hands of some master-player, like Madame Suggia, we feel it to be linked indissolubly with ourselves, part and parcel of the human race, able to sigh and laugh, even to chuckle, with us; or to sing, gloriously triumphant, like young manhood striding o'er the Downs in the noontide glamour of a June day. Let us hasten soberly to remind ourselves that when it is called forth by hands not skilful the voice of the 'cello is by no means nice to know! First-rate 'cellists are exceedingly few: even second-raters are not plentiful, so that most people gain unpleasant impressions when the voice of the 'cello is heard in our concert halls.

Suggia confided to me one afternoon her conclusions about this scarcity of good 'cellists. "They will not practise *properly*, nor will they study seriously," said she. Into her strong, clever face came an expression of mingled surprise and pity—surprise that lackadaisical students should fritter away their opportunities, and pity for the weakness of will answerable for this lack of intelligent concentration. The genius that blossoms to perfection is the genius that has paid heed to the "infinite capacity for taking pains." It has been said that this of itself begets genius; but one need only hear Suggia play, and become acquainted with her fine personality, to find out that, with her at any rate, the "infinite capacity" has been as oil unstintingly used to feed the pure flame of her artistic ideals.

For her career has not been by any means plain sailing. Indomitable courage has been needed to carry her through many difficulties. At one period of her studies her eagerness to excel and her enthusiasm for her lessons, not being wisely overlooked, led her to practise for too many hours at a time. Fortunately she discovered just in time the grave risk she ran of irreparable muscular strain from overwork, and immediately looked round to find other methods of attaining to the technical perfection for which she yearned, and without which she was increasingly conscious of barriers to the full expression of the music as she saw and felt it. It was at this stage in her novitiate that she went to Leipzig to study with Julius Klengel. With him she soon felt herself to be progressing rapidly. To his wise guidance she traces an insight into a system of study along proper lines, obviating physical weariness, and dangers from muscular strain. She played a good deal with Señor Pablo Casals, in works for two violoncellos, several of which were specially composed for the two artists by Emannuel Moor. In these duos Casals would sometimes play *primo*, and Suggia *secondo*, and sometimes they would reverse the order, she playing principal. They gave performances in the chief musical centres of Hungary and Germany. This collaboration

with so fine an artist as Casals was a fortunate happening for the young 'cellist, and no doubt beneficial to her art, besides being very congenial. Probably the association of the two artists in concert work gave rise to the impression, still prevalent in musical circles and stated as a fact in at least one work of reference, that she was a pupil of Señor Casals. As we have seen, however, this was not the case ; and I take this opportunity of authoritatively correcting the mis-statement. While she was still a young child Guilhermina Suggia studied the 'cello with her father in her native Oporto. There can be no doubt, as in the case of all talented children destined for a professional career as instrumental soloists, that this early training of the hands and arms, while pliant, must have been very helpful to her when she came to study seriously the technique of her instrument; but this is the only tuition, besides the



MADAME SUGGIA.

From the portrait by Augustus John in the National Portrait Gallery.

(Reproduced by kind permission of the artist.)

important work done with Herr Klengel, to which Suggia feels indebted.

Although she spends a good part of each year, during the warmer months, in England, she has made her home in Oporto. Last autumn she was married to the famous Portuguese Major, Doctor José Carteado Mena, Director of the Pasteur Institute of Oporto, and a well-known radiologist. Naturally, Suggia retains a deep affection for her own sunny land, making her home in Portugal a winter haven from the generally inclement weather experienced here at that season. Her parents, and many of her friends, live there too, so that there are stronger and deeper reasons than the conventional "escape" from our notorious winters to make her hasten southwards as soon as she can. Professional engagements may, and usually do, prevent her for a month or so from following in the wake of the swallows. The lure of the warmth and the sunshine is as potent for her as for them. One found it easy to sympathise with the note of longing in her low, musical voice when she spoke, on a raw, November afternoon, about the favoured climate of her southern retreat. There, of course, are flowers always, growing naturally outdoors, as she loves to see them. In that warmer climate to bring them indoors as cut blooms causes them to wilt and die before their time. Here, we know, late roses and other late autumn flowers seldom expand fully unless they are cut and placed in a bowl of water in a warm, sunny room. Existence is actually prolonged thereby. Perhaps because early associations are powerful factors towards the crystallisation of our opinions in later life, Suggia finds herself in entire agreement with those for whom a bowl of cut flowers symbolises the slaughter of the innocents.

Augustus John has most truly mirrored the dominant strength, the regal poise, of her personality in his portrait of her playing one of her beloved *'celli*. *En passant*, it may be said that she possesses both a Stradivarius and a Montagnana violoncello, each of them a fine example of the art of the luthier. Domenico Montagnana was for long a pupil of Stradivarius, whom he survived by only three years, dying in 1750. His matchless violoncellos, of which Suggia's is one of the exceedingly few left to our generation, are generally regarded by connoisseurs as little, if at all, inferior to those of the great Antonio himself. But to return to the John portrait. It certainly depicts Suggia to the life, as her audiences know her. But from the very nature of the pose it conveys no hint of the streak of almost maternal tenderness in her nature for helpless things and for old folks. Nor when she is seen thus, from a distance, playing, can the expressive beauty of her dark, brown eyes be realised. One is then more apt to gain an impression of them half veiled by the eyelids, for when Suggia is completely in the mood, and is playing something of which she is particularly fond, utterly regardless of everything and everybody but the music, she has a habit of almost closing her eyes. Her face then expresses supreme happiness. But let something "gang agley" with the accompaniment, some slight rhythmic divergence on the part of some member, or members, of the orchestra for instance, and her expression becomes inflexibly determined. Metaphorically, her grip tightens upon the orchestral fabric. It may be necessary for her eyes to exchange a series of swift S.O.S. "wireless" messages with the conductor; but whether or not the need for that arises, we shall find her, well before the end of the work, leading the performance to a triumphant conclusion. Only a great artist of strong personality can emerge from an ordeal of that kind to the enthusiastic applause alike of audience and orchestra—as has occurred more than once to Suggia within my recollection.

At a recital in a provincial town a few years ago this cool-headedness in emergencies of the kind averted what might have been a most unpleasant *contretemps* for the 'cellist and her accompanist. The day before this particular recital she gave an interview to a newspaper reporter who, as too often happens, thought more of sensationalism than of veracity in his published account of the conversation. She was untruthfully represented as having said some most uncomplimentary things about the British public. As there was no time to publish a contradiction of the report, her nervousness when she went on to the platform may be readily imagined. In place of the customary applause there was an ominous, dead silence, while each person in the audience was reading, ostentatiously, a copy of the newspaper, rudely oblivious of her entrance! The very atmosphere seemed electric with hostility. She felt too horrified, too quaking with a nameless dread, to attempt the verbal contradiction that she sensed, as soon as thought of, would be worse than

useless; might indeed be the signal for an actively hostile demonstration. Summoning all her courage, she seated herself, outwardly composed, and began to play. She determined, like Orpheus, to charm by the sheer power of her art. For a little the fight was a grim one, but slowly she felt that she was gaining ground against the spiritual antagonism, the mass-hostility, which threatened to encompass her. Before the recital was over the crowd was applauding her vigorously. In due course the libel was laid bare and scotched.

To her interpretative art Suggia brings a wealth of imagination and an emotional warmth that are essentially romantic. There is this vivifying influence even in music like that of Bach (unaccompanied), as she re-creates it for us, although it may be music that appeals only in an austere way to players of restricted vision, to whom a Sarabande, for example, is merely a stately old dance measure, and not a sound-picture, conjuring visions of gallant knights and beautiful ladies of a bygone age. Naturally this quality in her playing is heard to greater advantage in *concerti*, like those by Dvořák and Elgar, or the Variations for violoncello and orchestra by Boëllmann, which find her in very congenial vein.

So far she has not visited America, professionally or otherwise. I believe this to be unique for a soloist of such distinction, living, for the most part, in Great Britain. But an American tour is not the comparatively simple thing for a string player to arrange that it is for a solo pianist or a vocalist. The pianist is likely to have just as good luck in the way of decent instruments to play upon in the States as in Europe. The string player, of course, takes his own instrument with him, and as he is accustomed to its peculiarities he is, apparently, at an advantage. But a player going from Europe to America has to face the unsettling effects of the sea air upon his sensitive violin or 'cello. Further, after arrival, there are different atmospheric conditions to be considered because of swift changes of temperature due to the central-heating systems. Sudden alternations of heat, cold and damp play the deuce with delicately wrought old fiddles, and loving her old 'cellos as she does, Suggia has felt extremely dubious about exposing them to such risks. To leave them behind is unthinkable. Any plan on that basis would be too much like tearing herself in twain!

But more than this consideration has been her earnest wish to remain within at most a couple of days' journey from her home in Portugal, so that she may be able quickly to go to her parents should either of them fall ill: and that, surely, is the best of all reasons for hesitating over the possibility of gaining fresh professional triumphs.



[*Bertram Park.*

MADAME SUGGIA.

THE MacGILLICUDDIE

By JAMES WARNER BELLAH

ILLUSTRATED BY C. FLEMING WILLIAMS

GAMALIEL J. MacGILLICUDDIE climbed slowly out of his S.E.5 and unfastened the chin-strap of his flying helmet. He turned up the ear-flaps and scratched the coarse grey hair at his temples. With a thumb and forefinger he pinched the bluish tip of his rough-hewn nose and pulled it slowly from side to side until it tingled again with returning life. Presently he walked over to the line of hangars. The Flight Sergeant saluted.

"Aye," said the MacGillicuddie, "ye will tell Misterr Alexanderr that Capt'n MacGillicuddie will hae a motor-cycle side-carr at his quarrterrs in fifteen minutes. An' ye will tell yon mess serrgeant that I'll nae be back till somewhat aboot ten to-night for m' dinnerr."

"Yes, sir," said the Flight Sergeant. "And if I may, sir, they do say it was wonderful work, sir."

The MacGillicuddie's eyes blazed in the gathering dusk and his thin lips came together into a straight hard line.

"Ye will nae say that worrd wunerrful again! Neverr again, Sergeant. The gude Book says thou shalt not kill! 'Tis a turrible thing tae kill, mon. I hae kilt this afterrnoon." The MacGillicuddie's chin drooped upon his broad chest. "Aye, kilt! May the gude Lord hae merrcy on m' miserrable sowl."

The Sergeant stared at the little oldish man before him and sucked in his breath in sharp amazement. The Sergeant was new to the Squadron. He saluted sharply. "Yes, sir," he said. He turned on his heel and walked briskly away toward Motor Transport, with wonder and fear in his heart.

"Serrgeant!"

"Yes, sir." The Sergeant stopped and faced about.

"Ye will hae the Gunnerry Officerr gie us a new feed block forr m' Vickerrs. One that will nae jamb again when I'm shootin' wi' th' gun. And ye will hae m' riggerr look ower m' right lowerr 'plane. I hae bullets in it and 'tis main low forr gude flyin' in a fight."

The MacGillicuddie pulled a short briar from his pocket and plugged it full of tar-heel with one stubby thumb. He took out his patent lighter and twirled the wheel against the calloused palm of his left hand until the smudge glowed. Then he blew upon it, nursed it to life, and clamped it to the tobacco in his pipe. His cheeks flattened and filled, flattened and filled in slow cadence until the bitter, blue smoke rose in a thick cloud and coiled round his head. He smothered the smudge of his lighter quickly, put it in his pocket, and dusted the crumbs of tobacco from his hands back into the throat of his pig's bladder pouch. He drew the string tightly and tied it and put the pouch carefully into his other pocket. Presently he trudged off slowly towards his quarters, his head bent, his hands clasped behind his back, and his short bow legs silhouetted sharply against the last grey light in the west.

Ten minutes later, he climbed stiffly and silently into the waiting side-car. Tightly clasped in his red-mittened hands he held a book and a folded Ordnance map. He stuffed the fringed ends of his tartan tippet into his trench coat and turned up the collar.

"Ye will take th' old Bapaume road, Driverr, until ye cum tae the picket lines of the Twa Hundred Twulfth Arrtilerry. Ye will turrn left therre and go on to yon Casualty Clearring Station."

The driver nodded and squinted closely at the map.

"Yes, sir. I knows the way, sir." His hand turned on the handle-bar and the

motor-bike churned slowly away from the hutments to the soggy roadway beyond.

The MacGillicuddie's head was bowed forward until his chin, swathed in the flaming plaids of the tippet, rested upon his chest. The driver stared straight ahead into the gathering darkness and jockeyed his bouncing motor-bike in and out of a line of camions that was crawling with full loads through the rutted slime that led up to the war.

Presently he shot out around the last tailboard and headed up the open road to the next crawling shadows ahead. The bike hurtled and bounced and slithered. Once it turned completely athwart the road and showered the dasher of the side-car with a broad sheet of liquid mud. The MacGillicuddie made no sound, nor did he raise his head. From the side of his mouth he spat. With one mittened hand he wiped his face absently and again grasped the book in his lap. The driver, soaked to the knees, choked back a round oath, glared sideways at Gamaliel, and drove on with his teeth clamped tightly.

There were ambulances ahead—seven of them crawling up slowly for the first load of the early evening. Ambulances with their curtains flapping and their tail gates rattling softly. A faint breath of iodoform, not quite smothered in the exhaust fumes, cut the air. The driver threaded his way around them and settled again to jumping the ruts of the open road.

The motor-bike was jolting alongside a marching column now. A column that slogged and plodded and splashed along in the darkness.

"Bally motor-bikes!"

"Not arf."

"Bloomin' shower-baff, *I* calls hit!"

The column fell away into the darkness behind and the side-car bolted on. Presently the driver raised his head and threw back his shoulders.

"This is the turn, sir. Them horses—I can smell 'em. Horses always smells different somehow. Yonder's the Batt'ry." He pointed to the right.

"Aye," said the MacGillicuddie. "Go left."

Slowly the driver felt his way up the ruts to the branch road. It was narrower and muddier and the going was slow and wet. For ten minutes they bounded and splashed along.

"Somewheres near here, sir," said the driver. He throttled down to bare headway and squinted into the blackness in front. A low jagged wall cut the lighter line of the sky. There were voices, low and tired.

"Here y' are, sir. There's the C.C.S." There was a faint yellow pinpoint of light close to the ground. Heavy feet sucked at the glutinous mud.

"Shall I ask, sir?" said the driver.

"Aye."

He trundled his bike to the roadside and waded up to the pinpoint of light. He brushed against someone in the darkness.

"'Ullo, mate. Seen a Hun crash near here along about sundown?"

There was no answer. The driver moved forward a step and stumbled against something hard and sharp. There was a low groan that trailed off into a weak childish sigh. The driver rubbed his shin-bone where the stretcher handle had struck him. Behind he could hear the coughing and popping of the ambulance engines as the train came up the road. The yellow pinpoint of light broadened and a dirty face was framed for a moment in the blanket that covered the cellar doorway.

"Say," said the driver, "you ain't seen a Hun come down hereabouts by any chance?"

"Hop it," said the face. "We ain't collectin' no Huns to-night. We got sixty-five lads to 'vacuate in half an hour on seven ambulances."

"But I gotta find this here Hun."

"Owes y' money, I suppose?"

"No—he's one of Capt'n MacGillicuddie's."

"Say!" said the face, "I mighta known that was the Mac's. He's up the road, about a hundred yards on the left. I seen it all just about sundown. A hell of a fight!"

"How do I get up to him?"

"Swim," said the face. "Lessen you got a canoe."

"But how do I know when I'm there?"

"Well," said the face, "if 'twas me, I'd smell a bit, and where the smell gits least there's your Hun. There's a rayvine this side, that's why y' can't smell much, 'cause there's water over 'em in the rayvine and the Mac's Hun is on top just over the edge."

"Thanks," said the driver.

Perhaps a half-hour later the driver, with a faint eerie chill playing rovers along the back of his upper ribs and the points of his elbows, was digging furiously and silently into the pounded, muddy soil of what had once been a stubble field. Ever and anon he paused to wipe his dripping forehead—but not for long—for when he paused the darkness closed in tighter around him and

the chill crept into the roots of his hair and rippled his scalp until his eyeballs became dry and cold. Close to him in the darkness there was the continued sound of another shovel that bit into the soggy ground with firm, wet sighs and scrapings—that tossed clods aside with soft, wet slappings. The other shovel ceased for a moment. Far down the darkened valley the white lash of a star shell cut the blackness and splashed on the heavens. For a second the driver saw Gamaliel MacGillicuddie's head thrown back—heard a grunt and a rippling gurgle.

"Driverr."

"Y-yes, sir."

"Ye'll be cowld?"

"Yes, sir. I'm fair soaked."

The driver reached for the bottle and grunted as the liquor gurgled in his own throat. His eyes opened wide in amazement. He had never tasted whisky like it, for he had never been farther north than the Crystal Palace, and you can't get a drop of it south of Inverness. He gasped and swallowed again—and again.

"It'll be just wot we need on a job like this, sir!" he said enthusiastically.

"Dinna say that, mon!" said the MacGillicuddie. "Whusky is forr cowld and dampness—nae forr ribaldry and nae forr making the Lord's work th' easierr! Gie us back th' bottle."

And again the shovels bit into the slush-mush of the wretched soil. The chill was gone from the driver's spine. The fire crept from his stomach to his arms and up to the top of his head. His heart glowed with a sense of the fitness of things. It was quite all right presently when he and the MacGillicuddie pushed and pried and tugged at a twisted Mercédes engine to release what it held. Quite all right when his fingers in the darkness brushed a wet cold face and found the eyes open and hard. Quite all right when his hands closed around stiff, booted ankles and lowered them into the wet, open grave.

The MacGillicuddie stood up after the earth was shovelled in.

"Driverr," he said softly.

"Y-yes, sir."

"Ye'll be cowld?"

"Yes, sir. Fair soaked and shiverin', sir."

And again his heart glowed and burned within him in righteousness as the liquor trickled into his stomach.

"We'll nae put up th' cross th' now," said the MacGillicuddie. "I hae the poor lad's disc and shoulder-strrap in m' pocket. I'll paint his name at th' airdrome and we'll cum back wi' th' light o' morrnin' and put up the cross."

The MacGillicuddie took off his hat and the driver grasped it in his free hand. Meanwhile he held the bottle with the other. Once again a star shell soared and sprayed its silver shower far down the black valley below them. In the faint distant light, the driver could see Gamaliel MacGillicuddie standing at the head of the grave, an open book in his hand, his head thrown back, incanting from memory:

"Th' Lord gaveth an' th' Lord hae taken awa . . . frae henceforth blessed arre th' dead wha die i' th' Lorrd . . . forr they rest frae theirre laborrs. . . . Amen."

The driver took off his own hat and threw back his own head. For a moment the last of the whisky purled and gurgled in his throat in a warm continued stream. His heart swelled within him.

"Amen," he said loudly. His mind groped for something more expressive of his true emotions. His lips opened and his throat rasped in healthy, fearless discord:

"When *themm* we *love* is *snatched* awayyy."

"Hush, mon!" hissed the MacGillicuddie. "'Tis a warr on doon yonderr! And 'tis unbefittin' tae sing Church o' England hymns ower any mon. Gie us m' hat an' bottle."

The driver relapsed into abashed silence—nor did he speak again until one hour and twenty minutes later, when he pushed open the door into his hut block and stood for a moment blinking in the dim light while the water trickled from his slicker to the floor and spread in a pool about the soft mud-clods that were his feet and legs.

"Whoops," he said, then, "I'm queen of the blinkin' May!"

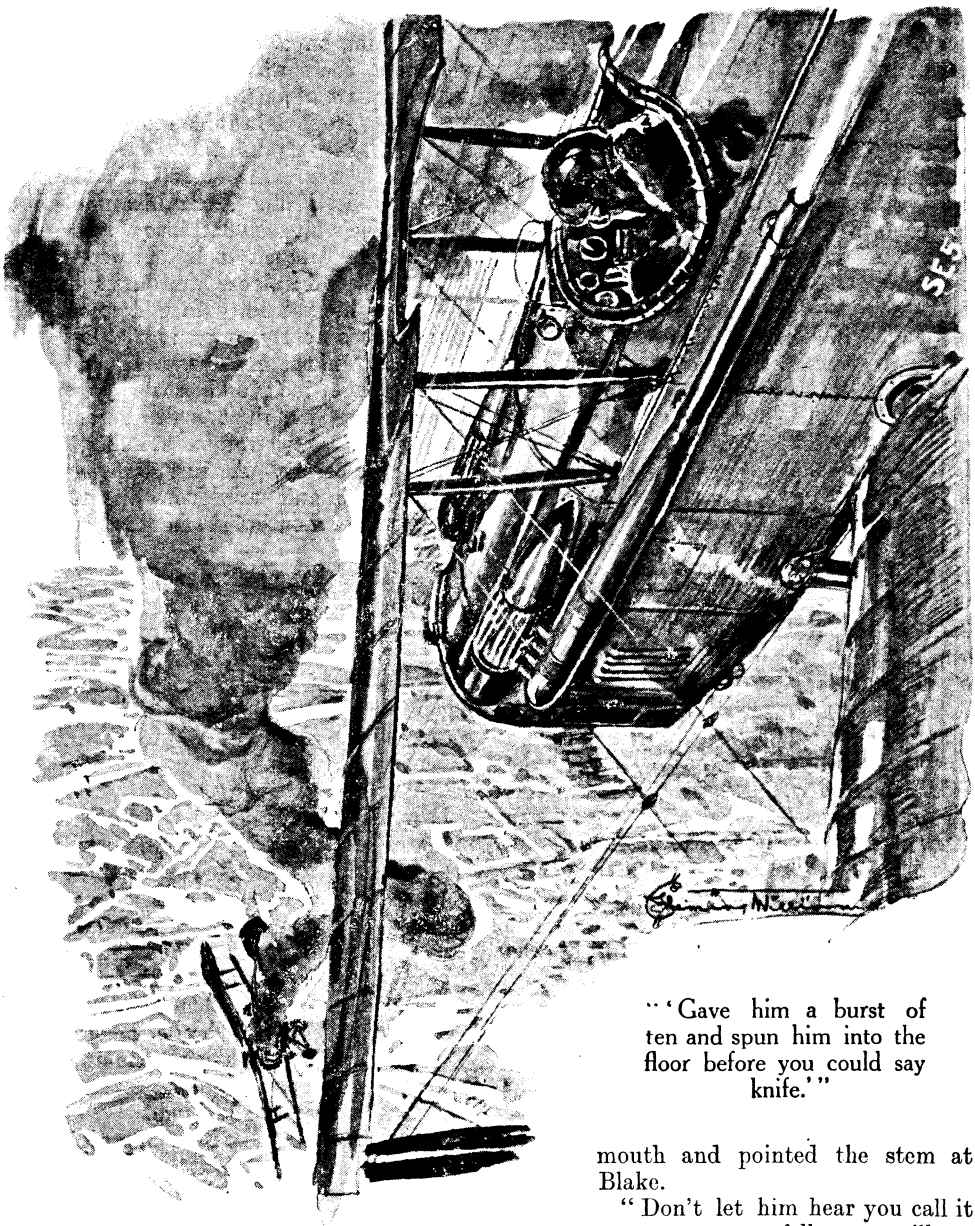
"Fair daft, he is." The Corporal leapt up from his cot. "Been out with Capt'n MacGillicuddie a-buryin' of the MacGillicuddie's bloomin' dead 'Uns. 'Ere, my man," the Corporal took the driver's arm gently. "Steady!"

The driver blinked and puffed out his cheeks. The Corporal stepped back a pace and coughed as the fumes seared his throat and nostrils.

"Daft, is it? It's daft *I* am! 'E's blinkin' well peeled to the gudgeons on the MacGillicuddie's whisky! Sharply now, my man. Into bed wid yer or I'll 'ave yer fer Orderly Room in the mornin'!"

The driver looked from the Corporal's face

to the cot and dived headlong on to it in a beautiful swan dive. Flat on his back he lay while they scraped off the mud in a search for buttons. And while they undressed him he sang softly and reverently:



"'Gave him a burst of ten and spun him into the floor before you could say knife.'"

"When *themm* we *love* is *snatched* awayyy ——"

Young Martin Blake, in his pyjamas, stood in the doorway of Harcourt's cubicle.

"See here," he said, "how much of this morbid nonsense does a man have to put up with? He's in there now painting the chap's name on a wooden cross. Gives me the fidgets!"

Harcourt took his pipe out of his mouth and pointed the stem at Blake.

"Don't let him hear you call it nonsense, young fella, or you'll get the worst talking to and praying over you ever had!"

"Well, it is nonsense!" said Martin Blake. "Silly nonsense. I was with him this afternoon on patrol. He spotted that Hun and thundered down on him so fast the

poor fellow never had a chance. Gave him a burst of ten and spun him into the floor before you could say knife. Old hypocrite! Now he spends half the night burying him and making a cross."

"The man's crazy," snapped Martin Blake. "Ought to be relieved and put away somewhere. He'll cut all our throats some night."

"Th' gude Book," smiled Harcourt, "says thou shalt not kill."

"Cut it, man." Martin Blake snapped his cigarette end into the corner and crunched it out with the toe of his slipper. "I'm fed up with it."

Harcourt leaned back in his deck-chair and clasped his hands behind his head. "I smoke a pipe—you smoke cigarettes. You put sugar in your coffee—I drink mine black. Personal preference. The MacGillicuddie buries his dead. I don't. Personal preference. You'll get used to it and learn to love the old duffer. I did before they took me out of his Flight and gave me C. You call him a hypocrite. Perhaps. Fact is, he lives up in Ross and Cromarty—northern tip—no railroads—four-day trip. His leave starts to-night, and he's taking twenty-four precious hours to bury this Hun and mark the grave before he goes. Another point. I suppose it's never occurred to you that he's the only pilot on the Western Front with twenty machines to his credit and no jewellery to show to his grandchildren for the job he's done. Why? Ask the Major some day. Old Taintor had this squadron when I joined first. The Mac came in from patrol one day with a slug through his stomach and his left arm smashed in three places. As he lay on the stretcher waiting for the ambulance, he grabbed Old Taintor's flying coat by the skirt.

"'Ye will nae,' he says, 'say ought o' this fight tae any mon wi' brass on his cap. It is unbefittin' a Christian tae get wee baubles o' gowld an' siller wi' ribbons on it forr cowld murrderr!' The Major's afraid to cite him. There isn't anyone at Wing with nerve enough to face the lecture the Mac would hand out if he got as much as a Belgian croix de guerre for a fight. And I've seen the Mac do stunts that would bring him an earldom if he was a politician. Go to bed and leave him alone unless you want this war to go on five more years. . . ."

The MacGillicuddie tramped up over the hog-back spine that leads out to Kinloch Head. He stopped for a moment and shifted the strap of his travelling haversack to the other shoulder. At his feet the deserted blue waters of Loch Kinloch were greying slowly in the cold evening light. The MacGillicuddie's chest expanded as he sucked in a great gulp of his native air. Below him, on a slight rise of the rocky shoreline, there was a small white cottage with a square of fence hedging it in. Smoke was rising from the rubble stone chimney in a straight, thin plume.

"Aye," said the MacGillicuddie. He took his dead pipe from his mouth and tamped the white ash heel into the bottom of the bowl. Tamped it lightly, so that it would not work loose and drift into his pocket as he walked. He had come thirty miles since early morning. Slowly he wound down the narrow pathway, floored with sponge rock and scrub gorse, and pushed open the little white gate. There was a tiny grey woman standing in the cottage doorway. A tiny grey woman, fearfully old and wrinkled. She took her pipe from her mouth and smoothed her apron absently.

"Ye'll be hame, Tammas?"

"Nae Tammas, Mutherr. 'Tis Gamaliel. Tammas hae been kilt now these twa yearrs."

"Aye—I mind th' noo. But m' eyes'll nae be sae gude, ye'll mind. Ye'll be wantin' a wee bite. Ye've cum a long walk frae Glenelgbeath, bairn."

"Aye."

Gamaliel MacGillicuddie unhitched the strap of his haversack and hung it on the wall beside the door. For half an hour, meanwhile he washed and changed his breeches for old tattered kilts and stockings, he said nothing to his mother and his mother said nothing to him. In silence they ate their porridge, and in silence Gamaliel took out his pipe and relit the dead heel for his after-supper smoke. They went out to the bench beside the door and sat staring across the dark waters of the Loch.

"I'll be gaein' back i' th' mornin'," said the MacGillicuddie. "'Tis a long way I've cum frae France."

His mother nodded silently in the darkness beside him. And presently—

"'Tis a fearrful long warr, Tammas. Nigh twenty yearr th' noo since th' Monn went awa."

"'Tis nae th' same warr, Mutherr. 'Tis twa warrs. The Fatherr was kilt i' th' last, ye mind."

" Aye, 'tis a' th' same tae a womonn, bairn. 'Tis time forr prayerrs."

The MacGillicuddie went inside and groped for the huge Bible in the darkness. After he had found it he opened it on the table, and lit a lone, sputtering candle. He stared at the open pages for a moment and then drew back and bowed his head.

" Ye will rread, Mutherr," he said. " Forr 'tis unbefittin' a mon frresh frae th' warrs, wi' blood on his hands, tae touch th' Book o' th' Lorrd."

The old woman blinked at him and smoothed her apron nervously. " But warr, bairn, is killin' an' killin'."

" Aye—but 'tis nae right i' th' Lorrd's eye an' I cannae rread th' night."

She sat down and straightened her iron-rimmed spectacles upon her nose. Bending close to the great rambling print, she read in a cracked, trembling monotone:

". . . But let yourr communication be, yea, yea; nay, nay: forr whatsoeverr is morre than these cometh of evil. Ye hae hearrd that it hae been said, An eye forr an eye, an' a tooth forr a tooth: But I say unto you . . ."

When she had finished scripture reading, the MacGillicuddie snuffed out the candle and bent his head in brief prayer while his mother nodded opposite. Presently they got up in the darkness and went to bed without another word.

In the cold light of early morning, the MacGillicuddie, dressed again in his breeches, was washing his face in the wooden pail at the kerb of the spring. Inside the cottage, his mother bustled about, crooning to herself as she stirred the breakfast porridge and steeped herb tea to strengthen him for his day's walk back to Glenelgbeath. The MacGillicuddie straightened up and towelled his face and neck roughly. He gave a hitch to his braces and pulled on his tunic. He stood for a moment looking at the dwindled wood pile in the side yard, then slowly he trudged down the path that led over the rock shoulder to the shoreline below. There would be driftwood there—too heavy for the old woman to carry. The sea breeze was strong on his face. He bent his head and scrambled down the rocky face to the edge of the cove waters. For a moment he stood looking at the scattered balk-ends that had drifted in since he had last been home. The inshore bits he collected and heaped into a pile to carry up to the cottage.

Bobbing and scraping against a snub-nosed rock, there was a deck-chair, its varnish quite white with salt crust. The MacGillicuddie reached over and fished it out with a length of wood. Carefully he set it up and tested its usefulness. The cane of its seat was slack and weak. However, carefully dried out it would do. But suddenly the MacGillicuddie stiffened and his knees cracked with the quick tension of his old muscles. Slowly his calloused fingers coiled, until his fists were clenched so tightly that the knuckles showed white through the cold blue of his hands. On the other side of the snub rock there was the back of a life-belt, grey and wet—bobbing and sighing against the stone with the slight lift and fall of the waters. The MacGillicuddie stared at it—at the mat of golden hair that floated in the water around it. Quickly he leapt out upon the snub rock, and again he stiffened and his fists clenched. There were more lifebelts on the waters beyond. Four he counted, caught in the sheltering arm of the cove, bobbing gently in the raft of driftwood. He stood there, etched against the grey morning sky for a long moment, then he knelt upon the rock and prayed. Presently he lifted the little girl at his feet and carried her to the sands beyond.

He stumbled up the rock shoulder to the cottage and pushed open the gate.

" I'll nae gae back 'till th' morrnin', Mutherr," he said.

All that day the MacGillicuddie laboured. Up and down the shoreline he worked, gathering the harvest of the War, wading out into the bitter waters—swimming once when the waters were too deep to wade in. Twelve he gathered and carried tenderly back to the narrow beach. And not a word escaped him, neither a prayer nor a curse; but as the afternoon wore on, his blue lips became thinner and thinner and tighter and tighter.

Only once did he speak. The fire had died to a heap of rose ashes that writhed and crawled in the darkness under the sharp breeze of evening.

" Aye," he said. " Women an' childern. Women an' childern. 'Tis nae warr—'tis murrderr—cowld murrderr! I hae heard o' it—but now I hae seen!"

Carefully he heaped the shallow sand over the ashes and formed it into a single low mound by the side of the sighing waters. At one end he piled a small cairn and put up his cross—a cross with no name upon it.

Late that night he leaned over his mother's bed.

"I'll gae back th' now, Mutherr."

"I' th' night, Tammas?"

"Aye. 'Twill be mornin' soon, an' I'll be in Glenelgbeath by noon."

"An' ye'll cum back again?"

"Aye—when I cum. Therre is siller on th' table. Ten pound. 'Twill last ye 'till I cum."

"God gae wi' ye, Tammas."

"Aye, Mutherr. 'Tis Gamaliel."

"'Tis a long warr—aye—I mind th' noo. Tammas is kilt these twa yearrs."

He wrapped his tartan tippet around his neck and buttoned his trench coat. In silence he went out and closed the door. The gate clashed softly shut behind him and he trudged up to the hog-back that leads down by Kinloch Head. On the ridge he paused and turned his head towards the sea.

"May th' gude Lorrd hae mercy on m' miserrable sowl an' gie me strength," he said. Then he raised his right hand, fist clenched, and shook it fiercely at the darkness that shrouded the Head and the heaving sea beyond. . . .

"I wish," said Martin Blake, "that they would stop this stupid war before we get to Berlin." He drew deeply on the stub of his cigarette and tossed it away. "First of all, I've lost half my kit on the last three moves we've made. And Berlin is a rotten city."

"Lucky man." Harcourt strapped his chin-strap and pulled on his gloves. "I haven't a stitch left and I'm brushing my teeth with button polish."

"And the MacGillicuddie," said Martin Blake, "is driving me crazy."

Harcourt laughed. "First he drove you crazy because he buried his dead, and now he drives you crazy because he doesn't."

Martin Blake turned sharply. "I suppose you don't know what he's got in his kit-bag?" he snapped.

"No," said Harcourt.

"Well, take a look-see some time. You'll get a shiver or two yourself." He turned on his heel and stalked over to his machine.

The MacGillicuddie was already in his cockpit, warming his engine with a careful hand. The other pilots in the Flight were climbing in one by one and revving their motors. The Mac waved for his wheel chocks to be pulled and taxied into the centre of the pounded 'drome that had belonged to a German squadron four days before. In a moment his engine sang into life and he streaked off into the wind, the Flight in formation on his tail.

He led them out at a low altitude for the morning troop strafe. Valenciennes peeped from her mist shroud far to the right and behind them. The MacGillicuddie turned northward on a winding trail, searching for the new line of the morning. There might, with luck, be strips of shiny tin on the backs of the men who grovelled and crawled in the mud on the ground below. More likely there would be a red Very light—or a green one, fired under the assumption that anyone in an aeroplane would simply read the mind of the man who fired it and know what he meant.

In one spot along what had once been the road to what had once been a little place called Mons there was a tremendous racket. Martin Blake squinted at the clustered grenade bursts and shot his nose forward. Sharply his gun chattered above the roar of his straining engine. With the MacGillicuddie to the right of him and slightly in front, he lashed down towards the brown slime below and raked it with his steel-jacketed flail. They zoomed together—close enough to see upflung arms—and turned northward for the next job. Martin Blake didn't know it, but he had helped an ancient feud. Eighteen hours later, the 48th Canadian Highlanders would have clubbed and hacked and blasted their way into Mons, from whence the 48th Imperial Highlanders had been driven forth four years and four months before. For the MacGillicuddie, he had merely seen kilts below him.

The rest of the Flight had beggared off into the mist on individual strafes of its own—or perhaps for more sleep. The air above was clearing slowly as the MacGillicuddie led Martin Blake on toward Nivelles. Blake closed in on his tail and sawed wood. Presently the MacGillicuddie began to climb. He had decided, evidently, that hedge-hopping was poor business for a good flying day. Martin Blake's altimeter needle trembled across the 10,000-foot mark and inched steadily upward. He pressed his Bowden trigger to warm his guns against the cold bite of the November air. The shots snickered coldly as the guns stuttered into life. And still the MacGillicuddie climbed into the upper silences. Eighteen thousand feet.

"Ass!" snorted Blake. "Silly old Scotch idiot. Trying to freeze a man to death for no good reason." They were in the mist whisps of clouds, still climbing, when suddenly the MacGillicuddie's arm snapped up. Blake looked, and the Mac-



"He lifted the little girl at his feet and carried her to the sands beyond."

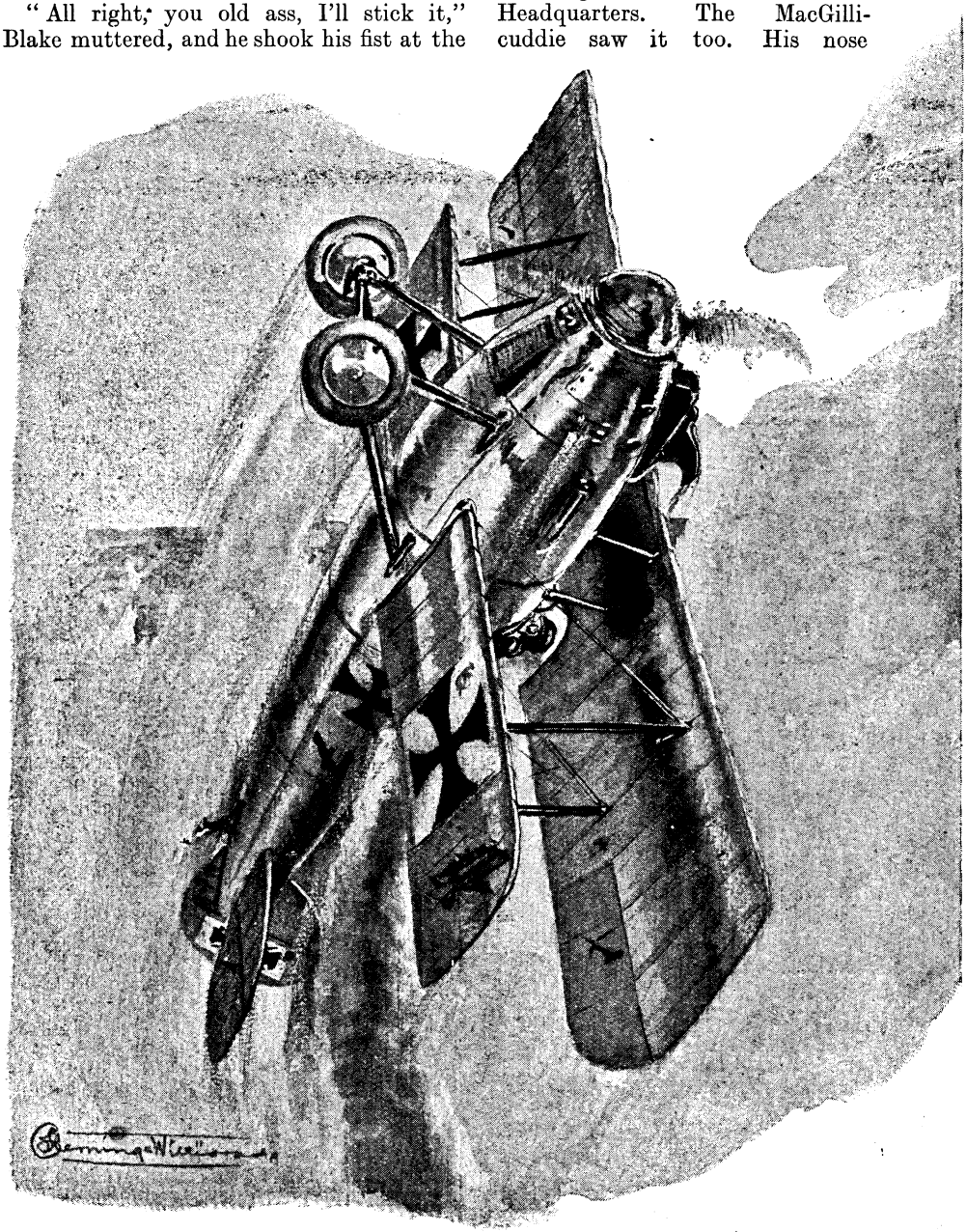
Gillicuddie was gone, straight downward in a quick dive, engine full on. Blake followed him and thundered down above him on to the poor lone wretch below. It was all over in a second and the Hun, with a smoke-feather trailing him, flopped aimlessly downward in a flat spin. The MacGillicuddie circled and took the lead again. Out of the corner of his eye, Blake watched the Hun flop and stall and whip off his wings—and his heart was sick within him.

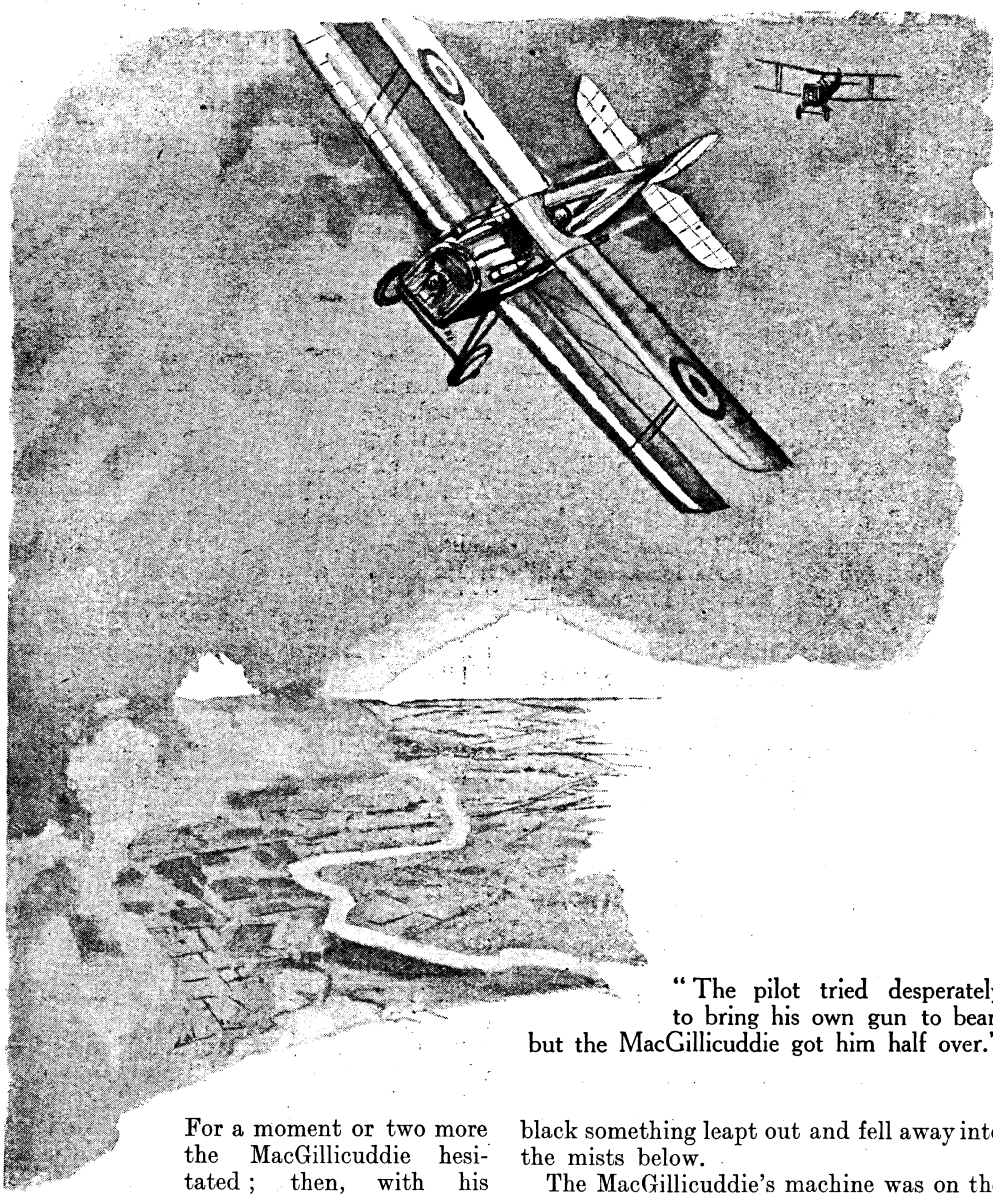
Again they were climbing into the cloud

whisps. Blake stared at the MacGillicuddie's back and followed on. Another half-hour and the MacGillicuddie would circle back for home. But the MacGillicuddie didn't. He kept straight on, rimming the clouds, looking from side to side as he wound in and out.

"All right, you old ass, I'll stick it," Blake muttered, and he shook his fist at the machine ahead. It was cold—the thin cold of the upper reaches that deadens the blood and coils the sharp, cruel wire of weakness around the heart. Surely he'll get enough of it soon. Almost three hours now.

And then, below him, he saw a Hun two-seater skulking homeward. Probably some photography 'bus trying vainly to get information of the hopeless smash-up for the tottering minds of German Great Headquarters. The MacGillicuddie saw it too. His nose dipped into the dive and then suddenly pulled up, only to dip again. Blake watched him and followed him down.





"The pilot tried desperately to bring his own gun to bear, but the MacGillicuddie got him half over."

For a moment or two more the MacGillicuddie hesitated; then, with his throttle full on, he pushed his nose straight down on the two-seater's tail. Blake dived with him and opened fire. He could see the Hun observer whip his gun into action and start firing. The smoke trail of tracers zipped past his left aileron for a moment and then stopped as the observer collapsed under the return fire. The pilot tried desperately to Immelman out and bring his own gun to bear, but the MacGillicuddie got him half over. There was a burst of pink flame that rippled along the Hun's fuselage in hungry, licking tongues. His nose dropped and a kicking black something leapt out and fell away into the mists below.

The MacGillicuddie's machine was on the ground when Martin Blake landed at the aerodrome. He taxied in to the emergency hangars, shut off and climbed out. As he lit his cigarette a hand touched his elbow. He turned and stared down from his six feet two into the upturned face of the MacGillicuddie.

"Ye will say nought o' the last one, d'ye ken?"

"The two-seater?"

"Aye," said the Mac. "Say nought o' the twa-seater tae any mon. 'Tis nae m' practice to fight wi' twa-seaters. 'Tis m' first offence. Ye'll be a young mon an' ye

will nae unnerrstand what I'm tellin' ye. 'Tis true I've kilt thrree times th' morrnin', an' I took yon twa-seater because I needed tae kill thrree times an' therre was nae morre single-seaters up. Yon warr will be endin' soon an' I could nae take chances o' missin' m' thrree, d'ye ken ? "

" So you popped two at once ? "

" Aye."

" So be it," said Martin Blake. " I'll keep a tight lip."

" You'rre a braw lad," said the Mac. " An' th' gude Lorrd hae mercy on yourr sowl."

" Bother my soul," said Martin Blake.

The MacGillicuddie stepped backward and his eyes widened.

" Dinna say that, mon ! Ye hae kilt, an' th' gude Book says thou shalt not kill."

" True," said Martin Blake. " And if you've read further, you'll find it says, ' An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' "

" Aye," said the Mac. " I hae read—but 'tis nae excuse. 'Tis the old law, God help us, 'tis nae th' new."

" Well, then," said Martin Blake, " let's eat. . . ."

The MacGillicuddie pushed open the small white gate in the darkness and dropped his kit-bag in the tiny front yard. The bag clacked and clattered softly. He crossed the grass-plot and opened the cottage door.

" Mutherr."

" Aye "—from the darkness.

" 'Tis Gamaliel."

" Aye, bairn." There was a rustling sound and a thump from the corner of the room. " Ye'll hae cum a long tramp frae Glenelgbeath. Ye'll want a wee bite."

" Aye."

The MacGillicuddie closed the door again and went out into the yard. He picked up his kit-bag and stood for a moment staring into the darkness that drowned the blunt nose of Kinloch Head; then slowly he crossed the yard and took the path down over the rocky shoulder to the cove beach below. His feet slipped and scraped sharply against the night softness of the plashing waters. Presently he stood upon the beach. With one hand he groped for his pocket-flash and turned its white finger upon the mound with its single nameless cross. Then carefully he opened his kit-bag and piled its contents upon the sands. He walked over to the cairn and removed the cross.

Half an hour later, when he trudged up the path again to the cottage with his empty kit-bag in his hand, there were twelve crosses bristling the mound—twelve nameless crosses that the MacGillicuddie had carried home from France. One for each of the men he had killed since he had made the mound.

At the gate he stopped a moment.

" 'Tis th' old law, mayhap—but 'tis right ! Aye, 'tis right. May th' gude Lorrd hae merrcy on *theirre* sowls forr the poorr little childerrn—forr the women they've kilt ! "

He drew a deep breath and stared out towards the shadows of Kinloch Head.

" Aye," he said aloud. " 'Tis right, an' therre is nae blood on m' sowl forr it ! "

Presently he was eating his porridge in the flickering candle-light.

" Ye'll be goin' back i' th' mornin' ? "

" Nae, Mutherr. Th' warr is overr these six weeks agone. I'll gae back nae morre."

" 'Tis gude. 'Tis shearrin' time an' I can nae manage sheep th' morre. 'Tis owld I am, bairn, wha' wi' Tammas an' th' Monn an' you awa."

" Aye—I'll bide wi' ye th' noo. Gie us m' kilts, Mutherr. Breeks is nae a mon's clothin'."

" 'Tis time forr prrayerrs first, Gamaliel—while th' candle is alight."

" Aye," he said.

She got up and crossed to the window-ledge for the great Bible. Hugging it close to her breast, she lugged it back to the table and opened it at random.

The MacGillicuddie stood up and touched her bent shoulder.

" I'll rread th' now," he said. " D'ye ken ? "

THE MAN FROM VRIES

By ALAN J. THOMPSON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. MARTIN POLLOCK

THE Curé Morrand walked slowly down the steps of the south terrace at Château D'Aurrenois. Beneath him, bathed in brilliant sunlight, stretched the beautiful grounds, smooth green lawns, parterres ablaze with flowers, trim box-bordered paths, ornate fountains, leafy bowers, yew trees trimmed into the semblance of fantastic birds, and the gleaming white statuary beloved of French horticulturists.

"It is strange," murmured the Curé, "that so great beauty should belong to so bad a man. The ways of Heaven are indeed beyond our poor understanding."

He sighed and shook his head.

On a stone bench near the fish-pond he found Mademoiselle. She wore a riding-habit of dark green velvet; white gauntlets lay on the ground beside her. She had been sitting with her chin in her hands staring at the shadowed pool, but on the priest's approach she sprang to her feet, colouring deeply.

"You—you have seen him?" she whispered.

The Curé inclined his head. He found it difficult to speak. Never before had he realised the beauty of the slender girl before him, her youth, her helplessness.

"I have seen him, Mademoiselle," he said at length, "but I confess with sorrow that my errand was in vain."

The girl shivered and the colour ebbed from her cheeks.

"I suppose he would not listen?" she asked in a low voice.

"So far I was successful," answered the Curé. "I prevailed on the Marquis to give me a hearing. I told him that to wed you against your will to any man was a grave wrong, but to force you into marriage with Riols de Jonclou was a monstrous offence against humanity and the Church. Your uncle replied to me with such insults, with such blasphemy, that I was appalled. I have long feared that the Marquis was a bad man, but until this morning I little imagined that he was black—black to the soul!"

The priest's eyes gleamed in his thin, lined face, and his hands trembled. For a moment he forgot the girl and remembered only the contumely he had suffered.

"Monseigneur forbade me the Château!" he exclaimed with bitter scorn. "He might have saved his breath. Never while he lives will I enter that unhallowed place or——"

The Curé stopped abruptly, checked by the thought that, while he was free to leave the Château and its terrible master, the girl before him was virtually a prisoner. Niece of the Marquis, she was friendless, except for himself. And he—what could he do?

Mademoiselle de Bérault, who had heard the death-knell of her last hope with such admirable fortitude, looked with compassion at the old priest's perturbed face.

"This is bad news, my father," she said. "It is indeed a shame that you should be forbidden the Château! I know the delight you have had in my uncle's library, his pictures and carvings. I am grieved that this should have happened through me——"

"No, no!" protested the Curé in distress. "Do not say that, my child! I think only of your trouble, and my heart is very heavy. Let us not however lose hope." He placed a compassionate hand on the girl's shoulders. "I go to pray for you. Be assured that *le bon Dieu* will not permit a marriage so outrageous. If you have need of me come without hesitation to the *cure*. And so courage, my daughter, courage!"

"I thank you, father," murmured Mademoiselle. "I shall always remember your kindness to me."

She knelt to receive his blessing. It would be, she felt sure, the last time she would hear the familiar words in the voice of her old friend. The Curé and all he represented stood for a life that would end that day with her marriage to Riols de Jonclou. She had judged it better that the priest should remain ignorant of the imminence of her shameful fate. It was beyond his power to avert the tragedy, and to tell him all would not only increase his grief but might provoke him to some rash action that would evoke the revengeful passion of the Marquis.

The Curé was about to turn away when a fresh thought struck him.

"After all," he said briskly, "it is possible, is it not, that Monsieur de Jonclou may not be so black as the gossips paint him? He comes of good family, and would be sufficiently a gentleman to respect—and perhaps yield to—any appeal you make him."

But this was more than Mademoiselle could accept with composure. She had endured much the last few days and her nerves were in disorder. The colour rushed into her cheeks and her eyes flashed.

"Appeal?" she echoed sharply. "Appeal? Your pardon, my father, but I cannot think that suggestion a serious one. I would rather die—die unshriven, than appeal to Riols de Jonclou! He is vile—a liar, a bully!"

The Curé stared in amazement at the girl who had become in one instant a woman, a woman on fire with passionate scorn. Yet he was not easily discomfited.

"There is no proof of that," he urged, rubbing his chin with bony fingers. "I believe, Mademoiselle, that neither you nor the Marquis has ever met Monsieur de Jonclou?"

"Precisely," agreed Mademoiselle more calmly, although with added bitterness. "Yet this individual—but recently divorced—has bought *me*, an entire stranger, to take the place of his unfortunate wife, has *bought* me on my uncle's recommendation, at my uncle's price—which I have good reason for believing was extremely moderate! Is that suggestive of the action of a gentleman? No, my father, your tender heart makes you over-tolerant. I know only too surely that Monsieur de Jonclou is as black, and blacker, than he has ever been painted for your eyes. He is all that is base! No one is safe from his treachery. He——"



Mademoiselle broke off abruptly, her lips apart, her eyes wide with surprise. Following the direction of her gaze, the Curé turned and saw a man standing hat in hand at the entrance of the grass walk leading from the fish-pool to the rosery. The stranger came forward quickly.

" Heaven save you, good father," he said with assurance.

The Curé inclined his head in silence. There was something in the new-comer's expression that made him uneasy. Who was this dark, handsome stranger in the plain and somewhat shabby riding-suit, who wore his brown hair unpowdered and walked as if he owned the province ?

" I trust you will pardon me if I am intruding," went on the subject of his thoughts. " To tell the truth, I lost my way in these delightful gardens, and hearing voices——" He finished the sentence with an airy gesture, his eyes passing boldly from the old priest to the girl.



" Following the direction of her gaze, the Curé turned and saw a man standing hat in hand at the entrance of the grass walk leading from the fish-pool to the rosery."

" Perhaps I can direct you, monsieur ? " said the Curé rather stiffly.

" Probably," replied the stranger. " Yet there is no hurry, and with the lady's permission I would like to rest a few minutes in this pleasant shade. The day is hot, and I

have walked since daybreak from Vries, where I left my mare the worse for a trifle of overspurring the previous day."

The priest regarded his smiling face with increasing disfavour.

"No wise man, I believe, over-rides his horse without good cause," he said sourly.

"True, father, true," assented the new-comer. "And I had the best cause in the world—a beautiful woman."

The priest was inclined to point out that the best cause in the world was the true religion, but while he sought for words the man with brown hair gave a sudden exclamation.

"*Mon Dieu!*" he cried, throwing out an eager hand. "There—above those trees I see—is that then the Château?"

"It is the Château D'Aurrenois," said the Curé.

"And my destination, father," declared the stranger. "Perhaps you can tell me if the Marquis is within?"

"Without doubt," replied the priest, curiosity getting the better of discretion. "Monseigneur is in the house, and in the garden is his niece."

The little gesture that escaped him with the last words was enough for the new-comer. He turned to the girl, who stood silent and watchful, and favoured her with a magnificent curtsey.

"My haste is rewarded sooner than I had expected," he murmured, "and"—his grey eyes swept the girl's graceful form appraisingly—"and rewarded far more richly than I had dared to hope. I can no longer doubt that I have the honour of addressing Mademoiselle de Bérault."

"That is my name, monsieur," rejoined the girl, her voice as cold as her eyes.

The stranger's hand was on his heart. "My good fortune overwhelms me!" he said smoothly. "It is with diffidence, Mademoiselle, that I introduce your humble servant—Riols de Jonclou."

The Curé gave a low cry of consternation and his finger closed convulsively on the silver crucifix at his breast. Mademoiselle made neither sound nor movement, only the colour ebbed from her face and left her white as death.

Jonclou, careless or unaware of the effect of his announcement, advanced to take the girl's hand, but before he could do so she drew back sharply.

"No, monsieur, no!" she gasped. "Do not touch me, do not——"

Evading the man's outflung arm, she ran swiftly from the enclosure. Jonclou turned as if to pursue, but the Curé stood directly in his path.

Jonclou regarded the priest's thin black-robed figure and pale ascetic countenance with a frown.

"Monsieur," said the old man, "a word with you."

"Well?" queried Jonclou brusquely.

"If you have any regard for what is right, for what is generous and honourable," urged the Curé, "I beg of you to relinquish the purpose which has brought you to Aurrenois, a purpose which can only bring shame and suffering on the young lady who has just left us."

Jonclou's eyes narrowed. "Are you in Mademoiselle's confidence, Master Priest?" he demanded with a smile.

"I am," replied the Curé. "It is on her behalf, monsieur, that I plead with you. She is little more than a girl, and such a marriage——"

"Bah!" interrupted Jonclou. "Save your breath for your Masses, father, and do not interfere with matters that are no concern of yours."

The old priest started as if the other had struck him.

"You are insolent!" he cried sternly. "You forget that——"

"I have no intention of being insolent," Jonclou interposed coldly. "But no man—even if he wears a soutane—interferes with the affairs of Riols de Jonclou. That is all I have to say, father—except that I have no love for priests. If you disapprove of Mademoiselle's marriage you can convey your objections to the right quarter—to her uncle and guardian, the Marquis D'Aurrenois."

The young man stooped to pick up and stuff in his belt the white gauntlets which Mademoiselle had left on the ground, then with a slight nod to the Curé, who surveyed him with speechless, impotent rage, he walked in a somewhat swaggering fashion towards the Château.

II.

THE Marquis D'Aurrenois leaned against the table and looked thoughtfully at his guest, who sat at ease in a carved chair with his feet—still in soiled riding-boots—crossed on a footstool.

The curtains were drawn and the lights in a massive candelabra kept at bay the gloom, if they failed to illuminate the spacious room, where covers for three had just been laid.

"Jonclou," said the Marquis, breaking the silence abruptly, "what did the Duke say when you told him you were quitting Paris and his company at such short notice —impelled by your friendship for me?"

Jonclou concealed a yawn.

"The Duke said nothing and I said the same!" he answered carelessly. "In fact, I left Paris without consulting his High-and-Mightiness."

"*Morbleu!*" exclaimed D'Aurrenois. "But you are a cool hand! You have—there is something about you, *mon ami*, that reminds me of those long-jawed, fish-blooded English."

"It is the accent. My mother was English," said Jonclou, helping himself from the Marquis's snuff-box. "But you knew that?"

The Marquis shook his head, a shadow on his face that neither paint nor powder could conceal. Ten years before D'Aurrenois had been as handsome a gallant as any in the King's Court, but a prolonged course of dissolute living had played havoc with his good looks, while unbridled passion had wrecked a promising career.

"I hate these English!" he declared. "That is, the men. The women have their points."

"No doubt you speak from experience," said Jonclou, with a slight smile. "It seems, my dear Marquis, that your experience of women is extraordinarily comprehensive."

The Marquis acknowledged the compliment with a slight bow.

"One lives—and one learns, monsieur," he admitted complacently. "But to return to the Duke——"

"Oh, to blazes with the Duke!" interrupted Jonclou. "Leave me to deal with the Duke later on—when I return to Paris."

D'Aurrenois frowned. He knew the reputation for insolence that Jonclou possessed; he knew that the fellow was an adventurer whose keen wit and amazing skill with the rapier gave him a high place at Court; but he felt his rank demanded, at least, a greater show of respect than it had received. Jonclou had only been in the house two hours, but the Marquis was already chafing at his effrontery.

"Your pardon, monsieur," he said coldly. "You forget that I, too, return almost immediately to Paris, and that I rely on the good offices of Némoule to serve me with King Louis."

"I forget nothing," retorted the adventurer. "That is all arranged. Besides—but there is one point, Marquis, on which I am not yet clear. What makes you so eager for Mademoiselle your niece to marry a man like—me? You sell the Château to the Duke; you return once more to Paris with the proceeds, to make a last bid for favour. Why not take the girl with you? She has looks, I understand, and looks go far at Court nowadays. The wench might serve you better than Némoule—*with the King*! You comprehend *hein*?"

"Oh, entirely! Most admirably put, *mon cher* Jonclou!" said the Marquis with a sneer. "But—you do not know Mademoiselle de Bérault. I would sooner trust every enemy I possess than that whey-faced cat! Serve me! Bah! There is little love between us, monsieur, I assure you. Her father was my enemy to the day of his death, and Gabrielle is his daughter in all things. But she is in my power now, and I—I give her to you, Jonclou. That is my revenge for—many things. I could think of no better. Sooner than forgo it I would forgo all hope of the favour of Louis, and spend my last days rotting in this accursed wilderness!"

For the first time the mask of indifference had fallen from the Marquis's evil face, and hatred, cruel and pitiless, ravaged it. Jonclou looked at him intently with half-closed eyes.

"So," he said quietly. "I understand. You can rely on me, Marquis. You may have heard—I have a way with women."

"Yes, yes!" D'Aurrenois laughed, and looked with something like respect at the young man reclining so indolently before him. "My sweet niece too has heard! You will find her—a little wild."

"I will tame her," replied Jonclou.

He spoke even more quietly than before, but there was something in his expression that made the Marquis regard him with increasing satisfaction.

"Since the time is short and I have no fancy to wed fasting," said the adventurer, "would it not be as well to spoil the look of that venison pasty yonder?"

"*Morbleu!*" cried D'Aurrenois. "I was forgetting! The priest will be here in an hour, and——"

He broke off to strike the bell at his side. The man who answered the summons exhibited a countenance in which curiosity struggled with deference and fear.

"Monseigneur?" he murmured.

"Have you forgotten to give Mademoiselle my message?" demanded the Marquis.

"But assuredly not, Monseigneur," replied the servant. "I conveyed it to Mademoiselle myself."

"Then where in the devil's name is she?" snapped his master.

"Mademoiselle is in her apartment, Monseigneur. Mademoiselle is indisposed, and begs to be excused from supper. Mademoiselle——"

"Blockhead!" roared the Marquis. "Have done with your Mademoiselle this and that! Go! Tell that vixen if she is not at supper in five minutes I will come and drag her down. If she is in bed she shall come as she is—and all the merrier, eh—Jonclou?"

He broke into harsh laughter as the trembling servant hurried away. Jonclou nodded his approbation.

"A hit, Marquis, a palpable hit!" he said, rubbing his powerful hands together. "It will serve for the Duke—a jest, *ma foi*, after his own heart!"

"*Pouf!*" said D'Aurrenois. "*Une bagatelle!* Come, monsieur. Let us to table!"

They drew up and were about to begin their meal when Mademoiselle made her appearance. She was white to the lips, but carried herself proudly, and walked without hesitation to the table. She wore a gown of black velvet, plain and shabby, without a solitary jewel. If she sought to render herself less attractive by such a sombre garb, the effort was unsuccessful. The severity of apparel only served to enhance the loveliness of face and form.

Jonclou's emotion at the sight of such beauty was not apparent. He nodded pleasantly enough and welcomed her with his mouth full.

"Your humble servant—if a hungry one, Mademoiselle de Bérault," he said. "My lips are busy now, otherwise——"

But further civilities were ended by a fierce exclamation from his host.

"*Mille diables!*" he cried, glaring at the girl. "What foolery is this, Gabrielle? Where are your ear-rings, your bracelets, your necklace, your—and that dress! Black, *mon Dieu*, but black! Regard that dress, Jonclou! Is that the garment a girl selects for her wedding?"

Jonclou shrugged his shoulders. "*Peste!*" he grunted. "What does it matter? Sit down, Marquis, and help me with this flagon!"

But the Marquis, who had started to his feet, strode forward and gripped the girl's slender shoulders.

"Upstairs, baggage!" he snarled. "And on with your best attire or I will give you a wedding present you won't relish!"

Still eating, Jonclou turned in his seat and looked at Mademoiselle. But whatever his glance conveyed it was lost; the girl had eyes only for her uncle's angry face.

"There is no need for wedding presents," she said coldly. "There will be no wedding. You may kill me, Monseigneur, but I will not wed that man."

D'Aurrenois drew back a step, releasing his niece. His face was suffused with a dull flush, his lips parted in a cruel smile.

"You refuse to do as I command?" he asked softly.

"I refuse," said Mademoiselle. She knew the man's unbridled passion, but she did not flinch.

"You jade!" thundered the Marquis. "You defy me? You——"

He raised his clenched fist, but before it could fall on the girl's death-like face, Jonclou had leapt from his seat and grasped the poised arm. D'Aurrenois struggled and swore, but he was powerless in the other man's powerful grip. With the utmost sang-froid Jonclou forced him into a chair.

"Marquis, Marquis!" he remonstrated. "Are you not a trifle inconsiderate? You will pardon my lack of ceremony, but I think you forget that Mademoiselle de Bérault is about to become my wife. I would prefer a bride with unbroken teeth! So perhaps——" He bent and whispered a few words in his host's ear.

The Marquis started.

"*Morbleu!*" he breathed. "I did not think of that!"

"But I did," rejoined Jonclou coolly. "As I am to wed this young lady within an hour, there is no reason why she should not learn without delay that when Riols de Jonclou is husband he is master too. You hear that, Mademoiselle? If you will kindly hand me that riding switch yonder, Marquis, and leave us together for five minutes—no more, no less—I promise you that I will convince this stubborn wench that she is not only going to wed me but also to obey!"

"Oh!" chuckled the Marquis. "Sits the wind in that quarter? I depart willingly, monsieur, willingly, although I would give twenty crowns to see the sport!"

But Jonclou, taking the switch from his host, shook his head, and D'Aurrenois after a greedy glance from the adventurer's fierce

face to the horrified countenance of Mademoiselle went softly out and closed the door behind him.

He had scarcely done so when Jonclou, tossing away the switch, stepped swiftly to the girl's side. She drew back with a gasp of terror, then stood motionless, rigid with amazement. For Jonclou was on his knees, his upraised face instinct with pity and with pleading.

"Mademoiselle, I beg of you," he said, "be assured. You have nothing to fear from me. Look!"

He drew something from his breast and held it towards his companion. As one in a trance she took it in her hands. It was a miniature, the face of an elderly woman, very sweet and gracious.

"That is my mother," said the young man. "I swear by my love for her that I am here to serve you, to save you!"

"To—to save me?" whispered the girl. "But I do not understand, Monsieur de Jonclou. I——"

"I am not Jonclou!" came the hurried interruption. "My name is Ravenel. I am an English officer. Listen, Mademoiselle! There is not an instant to lose."

He glanced sharply over his shoulder at the closed door, and then went on impetuously:

"Last night I met Riols de Jonclou in the inn at Vries—a chance encounter. He boasted in his cups of—of his imminent marriage to you—a young lady he had never seen. He is a blackguard and a foul-mouthed one. I told him so. He was insolent and insisted on fighting me. I wounded him in the shoulder—not so severely as I could have wished, but enough to put him out of action. This morning I came on here to see if I could be of service to you. Overhearing your conversation with the priest at the fish-pond, it occurred to me that since neither the Marquis nor yourself had ever seen Jonclou I might best attain my purpose by pretending that *I* was Jonclou. So far fortune has served me, but whether I am to be entirely successful depends now, Mademoiselle de Bérault, on you."

A faint colour had stolen into the girl's cheeks, and she gazed at Captain Ravenel with dilated eyes.

"On—me, monsieur?" she murmured. "Will you—explain?"

"If you can for one hour play a part as I have played a part," said Ravenel with the utmost earnestness, "if you can assist me to hoodwink the Marquis, all will be well. Regard me still as Riols de Jonclou. Let us go through this mockery of a marriage, which, as I shall use a false name, will be binding on neither of us. For to-night I will place you in the care of your friend the priest. To-morrow I will accompany you to powerful friends at Loubaix. Later, if you wish, I will take you to England and place you in the care of my mother. Can you trust me, Mademoiselle? You shall, I swear on my honour, never have cause to regret it."

For a moment the girl stood motionless, her eyes downcast, her hands pressed to her bosom. Then slowly she raised her head and looked straight into the Englishman's grey eyes.

"I trust you, monsieur," she said steadily.

Ravenel raised her hand to his lips.

"Now to proceed with our little comedy!" he said lightly. "You will remember, please, that I am still Jonclou—braggart and bully. Take this seat—at the table."

As the girl obeyed him he hurried to the door, threw it open, and called loudly for the Marquis. D'Aurrenois lost little time in answering the summons.

"Well?" he queried, looking eagerly from Ravenel to his niece.

"Excellently well!" rejoined Ravenel with a swagger. "The wild bird is tamed, *mon ami*. She will eat out of my hand—as you see! She will sup with me and wed me afterwards. We are already so much in love that I cannot bear her absence even to permit a change of dress! But come, Marquis, let us pledge the bride!"

It was a strange meal that followed, the Marquis and his guest eating and drinking freely, both, it seemed from their noisy jests, in the highest spirits, while the girl sat pale and silent, scarcely touching a morsel of food, shrinking from the quasi-Jonclou's proffered caresses.

But the wedding that followed was stranger still, when the sacred office was gabbled through in the candle-light by a loose-lipped, shifty-eyed priest, while the Marquis exchanged winks and grins with the bridegroom or frowned at the two *valets de chambre* who acted as witnesses.

The ceremony was soon at an end, and the priest hurried away with the servants to assuage a perpetual thirst. D'Aurrenois, having congratulated "Madame Jonclou" with mocking politeness, turned to Ravenel.

"You will of course spend the night here, *mon gar*?" he queried.

The Englishman shook his head.

"A thousand thanks, Marquis, but I must return at once to Vries," he answered decidedly. "A messenger from the Duke may be awaiting me."

"Hah!" said the Marquis. "In that case you will no doubt acquaint Némoule with the news of your marriage, which I hope he will regard as a guarantee of my goodwill to all in whom he is interested, and—— *Ciel!* What is that?"

He held up his hand, and the three of them stood silent, listening to the heavy rumbling of wheels in the drive beneath the windows. This had scarcely ceased when the sound of furious blows on the outer door rang through the Château.

D'Aurrenois ran to the nearest window and flung back the shutters. Moonlight flowed in bright enough to dim the candles.

"A berlin and four roadsters!" exclaimed the Marquis. "Who in Heaven's name calls on me at this hour?"

Ravenel made no reply. He began to whistle softly, but there was a frown on his brow which deepened as a perturbed-looking servant hurried into the room.

"A gentleman desires to see you, Monseigneur," he announced.



"His name, dolt, his name?" demanded D'Aurrenois impatiently.

"He—he calls himself Monsieur Riols de Jonclou," stammered the man.

The Marquis flung to the shutters with a crash. Ravenel, smiling oddly, stepped close to Mademoiselle.

"Jonclou?" repeated the Marquis slowly. "Jonclou? What folly is this,

son of a pig? Monsieur de Jonclou is here —here!"

"The fellow is evidently tipsy," said Ravenel, yawning. "He must have muddled the name or——"

"That, *mon ami*, is where you are entirely mistaken!" interrupted someone in a loud voice, and the next instant a tall man with his left arm in a bloodstained sling walked stiffly into the room. His fine suit of crimson and silver was creased and awry, his face was blotched and haggard, his coarse black hair dappled with powder and sweat.

"There is no mistake," he went on, his fierce black eyes roving from face to face. "*I* am Riols de Jonclou, and, by Heaven, the impostor who has dared to call himself that shall die with my sword in his throat. He—ah, so it is *you*, Master Englishman! I guessed as much. On guard, monsieur, or——"

"Stay, stay!" cried the Marquis. "You go too fast! I am the Marquis D'Aurrenois, and my private apartments are no place for brawling. This gentleman is my guest. If you have any grievance against him let us hear it without violence."

"A most abominable piece of insolence!" said Ravenel roundly. "I for one will not listen to this loud-mouthed bravo! No doubt he is in the pay of your enemies, Marquis. Let your fellows send him about his business!"



"After a swift glance about him Ravenel opened the door and swung the girl into the coach."

But the new-comer waved aside the words with a scornful laugh. With all his faults —and they were legion—Riols de Jonclou was a man of high courage and strong will.

"Bah!" he retorted. "Does a man journey from Vries with this"—he touched his wound—"on a fool's errand? What I say I prove. If you are the Marquis D'Aurrenois, I have papers for you from my noble patron, the Duc de Némoule."

He wrenched a packet from an inner pocket and offered it to the Marquis. The latter, plucking at his lip, hesitated. As he did so Ravenel bent his head and whispered to the girl, who, pale and still, had remained close to him.

"Directly I step forward run with all speed to the vestibule, and await me there. Courage, Mademoiselle! The game is not yet lost."

He had scarcely spoken when the Marquis shrugged his shoulders and took the packet from Jonclou. At once Ravenel strode to his side and raised the candelabra in a steady hand.

"You are right, Marquis," he said coolly. "We will examine these precious papers, and then"—he darted a threatening look at Jonclou—"and then we will deal with the bearer."

Jonclou laughed scornfully and joined the other two at the table. The girl had slipped like a shadow from the room, leaving the door ajar.

The Marquis broke the seal and tore open the packet.

"The Duke's hand!" he muttered. "Hah! 'The bearer of this, Riols de Jonclou, of whom you have heard . . . any service you can do him I will repay . . . His Majesty is at present antagonistic, but later on he—he will——' *Peste!* Keep the light steady, monsieur, or——"

But the sentence remained unfinished. With a quick movement Ravenel caught the Marquis by the throat and flung him bodily against Jonclou. They reeled against the table and from that to the floor, dragging cloth, glass and dishes with them.

Before the crash died away Ravenel had rushed to the door. He dropped the candelabra, trod out the lights, and then, leaving the room in darkness, stepped briskly out and locked the door behind him.

Mademoiselle awaited him in the vestibule. Ravenel flung a man's cloak over her shoulders, and drew her with him out into the clear moonlight.

"We win, Mademoiselle, we win!" he whispered. "But there is urgent need of haste."

The berlin loomed black before them. The horses fidgeted impatiently in the shrewd air. After a swift glance about him Ravenel opened the door and swung the girl into the coach.

"I will join you later," he said briefly.

Then he leapt up beside the startled *cocher*.

"*En avant, mon ami!*" he shouted. "Drive—drive like fury to Loubaix and there are twenty crowns in your pouch! Refuse and——"

There was no need to complete the sentence. Ravenel's dark menacing face and a glint of steel in the moonlight were sufficient incentive to the driver. He had no stomach for fighting. With voice and whip he urged the horses into strenuous action. Creaking and swinging, the heavy vehicle jolted along the drive and into the high road. . . . Hoofs clattered briskly on the frozen ground. . . . The Château D'Aurrenois fell away and was lost in the shadows . . .

So commenced Captain Ravenel's strange journey—a journey which ended only when he led Mademoiselle de Bérault into his fair English home and placed her—his bride-to-be—in his mother's arms.

MUSIC.

SIGH of the sea on the shore,
Song of the wind through the trees,
Stir of the whispering corn,
Sleepy murmur of bees.
Call of the owl at night,
Birds' songs at break of day.
And down in the quiet street
Sound of children at play.
Music has found me here,
In the little house by the sea.
Yet men will travel far
In search of a melody.

MARJORIE D. TURNER.



Majorca

WHERE THE SUN SHINES

By

SIR HARRY BRITTAIN
K.B.E., C.M.G., M.P.

A GLIMPSE OF PALMA BAY FROM THE HOTEL BALCONY AT EL TERRENO.

TO the old and seasoned traveller it is always a joy to come across what is to him a new and hitherto unsuspected paradise on earth. This has been my lot during a first visit paid to Majorca in the Balearic Isles.

For thirty odd years I have known fairly intimately the many varied and delightful playgrounds of Europe and have never been averse to adding one more "discovery" to those already made.

It is, I suppose, more than anything else the call of the sun which draws Englishmen abroad during the raw cold days of the English winter, and during a particularly evil winter of fogs, gales, rain and snow that call is especially insistent.

But where throughout the Continent can one be certain of this much-needed sunshine during — say — the month of February?

The Balearic Islands were suggested to me by Spain's distinguished representative, the Marquess Merry del Val, and so to Majorca I went.

The journey is one of comfort and simplicity. A direct train from Paris in the afternoon brings one about noon the next day to the great bustling city of Barcelona—a city which has improved out of all knowledge during the last few years, and which will be the Mecca of many travellers in the months to come when its great International Exhibition is a *fait accompli*.

Dinner in Barcelona, followed by a night journey on as spick-and-span a boat as



A THOUSAND YEARS OLD OLIVE.



ON THE NORTH COAST.

could be desired, and *petit déjeuner* awaits one at a Palma hotel.

It is well worth while being called early to catch the first glimpse from the sea of the Island's capital. I have been to most of the famous bays of the five continents, and for sheer beauty do not hesitate to say that that of Palma ranks with the best.

From whatever angle it is viewed, from sea or land, from its glorious Cathedral terrace, or from Bellver Castle, which crowns the city's wooded heights, it is surely one of the world's fairest prospects.

Majorca is about the size of Cornwall, with a population of 270,000.

Its history goes back to the misty ages. Celts and Phœnicians in their turn held sway, Hannibal raised an army corps from its hardy people, and Palma itself was founded by the mighty power of Rome.

Goths and Moors in their turn succeeded, to give way to the Island's youthful hero, Don Jaime I, the Conquistador, one of the most fascinating personalities of the Middle Ages.

The Island's long and interesting history has left its impress in many a building, and the study of these is by no means the least of the joys afforded during one's stay.

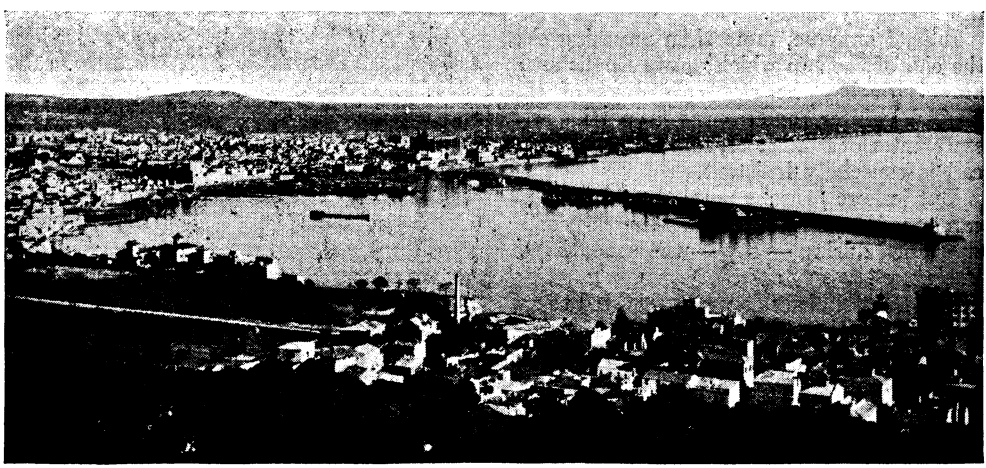
To-day the islands form a prosperous and well-governed province of Spain under a resident Captain-General.

And now for the sunshine.

I can, of course, only speak personally of my stay during one winter month—a month of outstanding awfulness throughout the greater part of Europe. From many famous centres I received letters—doleful letters—of miserable weather.

On two days we had rain, the rest of the time we revelled under a glorious sun, almost always from a cloudless sky.

I bathed practically every day; I don't pretend the water was warm, but it was not too cold for one who has passed



PALMA.

the half-century mark.

The outstanding point of the climate which impressed me was that it was soft—wondrously soft—and at the same time filled with those indescribable tonic properties which engender the real *joie de vivre.*

From south-east to north-west a range of mountains protects the Island and keeps off the cold northerly winds.



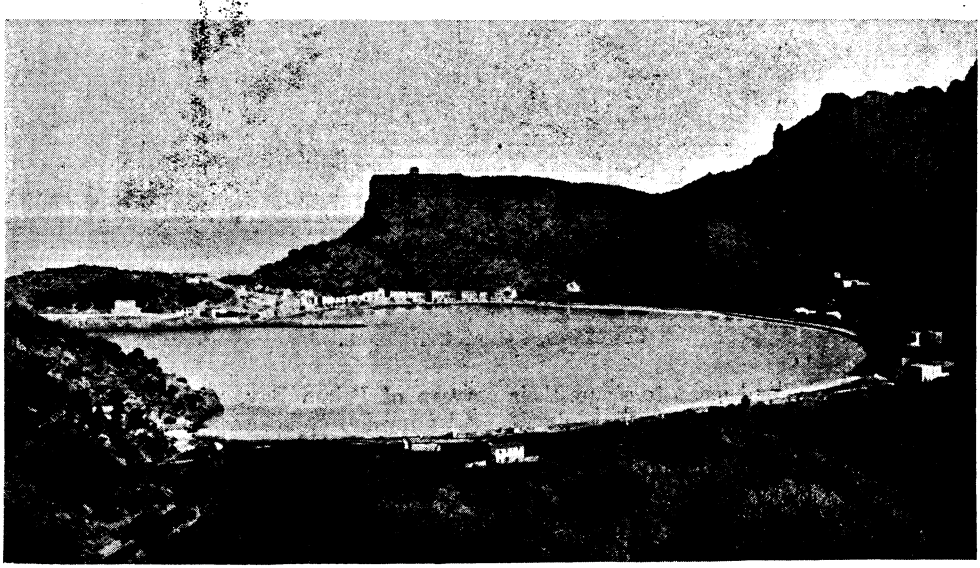
ALMOND BLOSSOM IN FEBRUARY.

During February the Island is a perfect blaze of blossom.

What Majorca offers during the other months of the year I learnt from old friends I met during my short stay, and their verdict was impressive.

An English General with whom I had come in contact years ago, and who has given every month a trial, told me that he had passed his active life soldiering in all parts of the world and had yet to discover an all-round climate which surpassed that of Majorca. His statement was endorsed by another old friend, Frederick Chamberlin, the American writer, who is responsible for more than one delightful—and useful—book on the Island.

Within the last few years it has become the fashion for British people to seek the shores of the Mediterranean—and of the Adriatic—in summer; when the many claims of



THE PORT OF SOLLER.

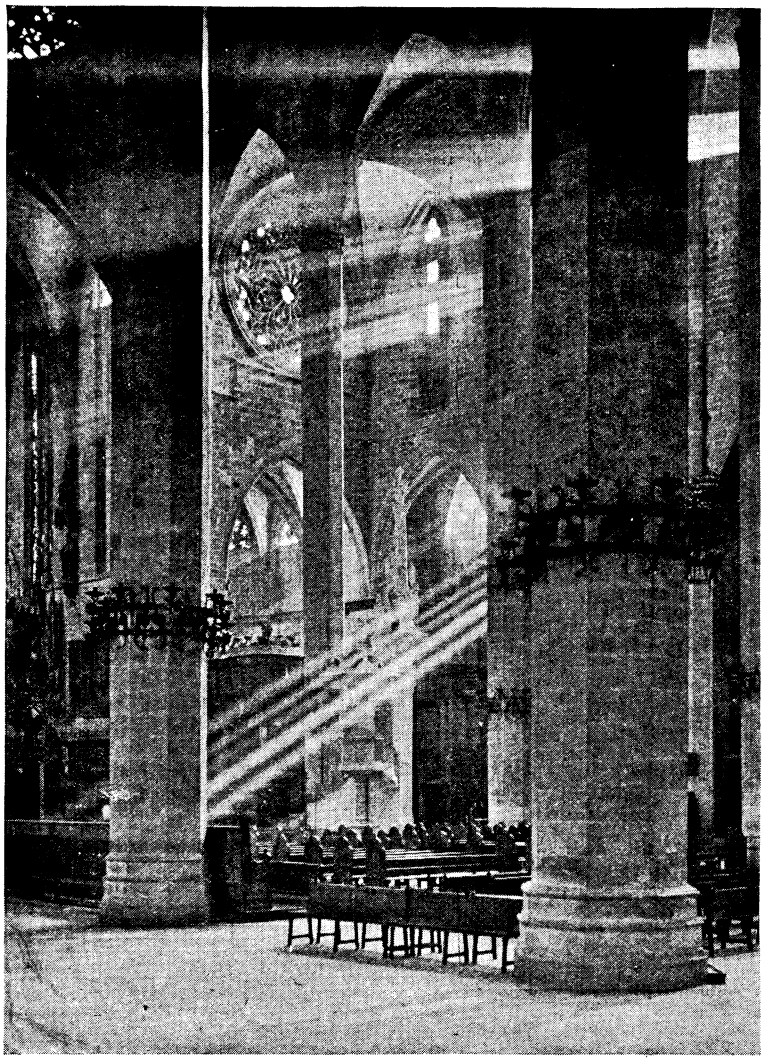
Majorca are better known, as I am convinced they will be, I venture to prophesy a great future for a series of summer resorts along the sand-lined coves and bays of this favoured little land.

Those in charge of the Island propaganda, the *Fomento del Turismo*, are alive to its all-round possibilities and mean to secure their proportion of visitors—and particularly of British visitors—and the heartiest welcome is forthcoming.

Never have I met a more delightful and cheery folk than the Mallorquin. The innate courtesy ever associated with Spain one expects—and finds; but with this is associated an ever-friendly greeting, a happy smile and a real readiness to help, which are among the happiest memories the visitor will take away.

I stayed at El Terreno, on the outskirts of the town, and from the balcony of the room in my hotel I looked out over the sweep of Palma Bay, with the clear blue sea immediately below. It would be hopeless to attempt a description of the view—but it was always a wrench to leave that seductive balcony.

Add to this scrupulous cleanliness, an excellent cuisine, a bill of unvarying accuracy and (compared with those presented at many



SUNBEAMS, PALMA CATHEDRAL.

less-favoured spots) of distinct reasonableness : so that hotel is another happy memory.

There are many opportunities for social foregathering—a pleasant British Colony of charming and hospitable folk, with the most helpful of British Vice-Consuls.

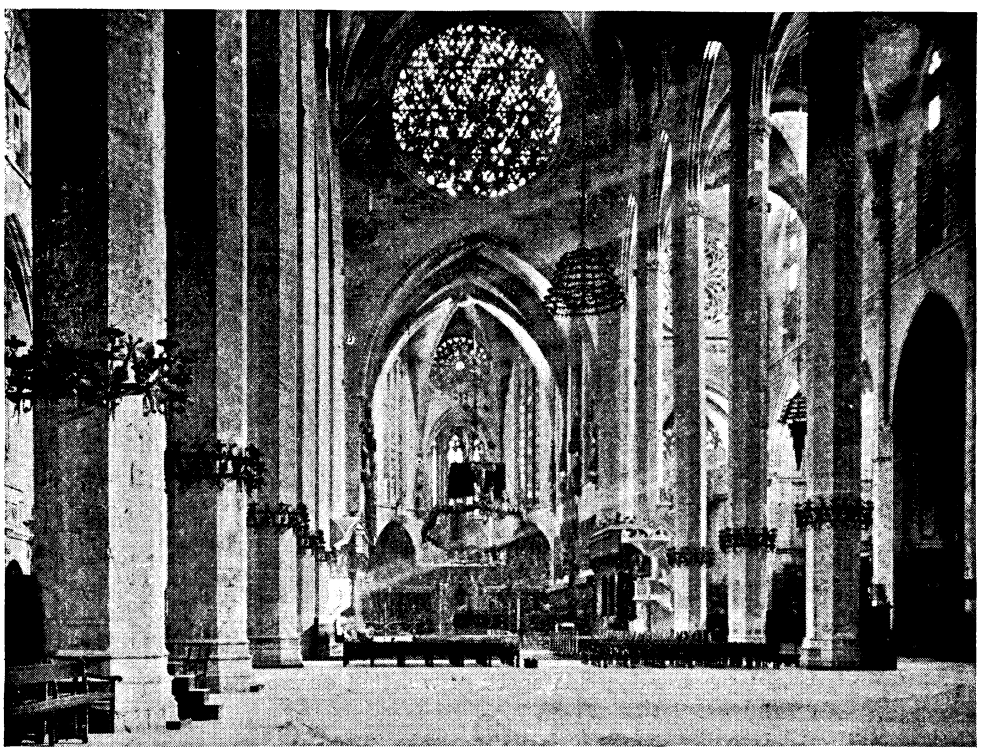
As yet there is no golf, but I enjoyed several games of tennis.

The outstanding joy to me, however, lay in exploring the Island.

Much I heard of the magnificent walks and climbs to be made in all directions, and I bling waters as the road twists and turns on its way from peak to peak. Then a picnic luncheon by the lighthouse of Port Soller, a delicious little circular bay for all the world like Porto Fino or Lulworth Cove.

Your luncheon party will probably be joined by a most sophisticated little group of fowls, possessing an unerring eye for anything like a picnic basket, and an unnatural taste for eggshells and chicken-bones.

Soller lies due north of Palma, and is a



PALMA CATHEDRAL.

Declared by the builder of New York Cathedral to be among the three or four most beautiful churches in the world.

can well believe it. I can only speak of the roads, and these I cannot praise too highly.

Expeditions there are galore—in good, high-powered cars (would that more of them were of British make), with really safe and most companionable drivers, and at rates that are not exorbitant.

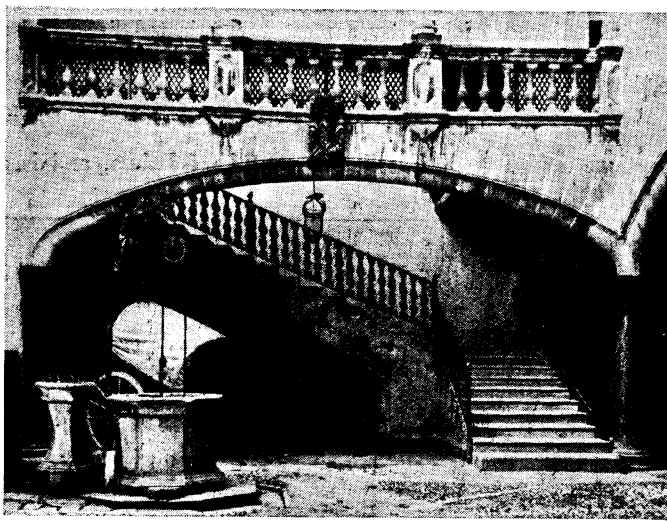
One drive alone—that to Soller (" Solyair " they call it)—is worth the journey to Majorca. The Mallorquin Corniche road is well worthy of its namesake, and nothing could excel the ever-changing panorama of wooded mountains, deep ravines and tum-mountain road throughout—and, incidentally, a fine piece of engineering.

Due east, across the plains, is another drive through Manorcor to the grottoes of Drach and of Arta, caves as interesting as any I have ever seen, not even excepting such wonders as New Zealand's Waitomo.

And these drives were through miles and miles of olive groves, backed by heather and lavender, of oranges, lemons, figs and almond trees, with the almond blossom showing signs of life and promising visions of beauty in the weeks to come.

Our last day we drove to Andraitx, on the western coast.

We had enjoyed a series of beautiful sunsets, but I verily believe that evening the western sky held in turn every shade and tone which poets throughout the ages have attempted to describe, and alluring looked the headlands and the clear, still water of the coves as we followed the winding road home.



PALMA IS FULL OF ARTISTIC HOUSES OF THIS DESCRIPTION.

Contentment and happiness seemed to reign in the intensively cultivated countryside; there was a touch of music in the air from the jingling sheep-bells on the neighbouring hills, and a smile and a wave of the hand from the hardy country-folk we passed along the road.

Those of us whose lot it has been to journey in many lands have, I think, this feeling in common.

Of places visited there are some we have no desire to see again; others which we would revisit, but perhaps without undue enthusiasm. But there are certain places which engender golden memories and seem to evoke some kind of subconscious pull, as steady and persistent as that of a magnet, for ever urging the wanderer to return. In this *sanctum sanctorum* I place, without hesitation, Majorca.

AWAKENING.

WHEN to that last deep Dark I turn my face,
Leaving this speck of whirling dust behind,
I shall not mind.
I shall not fear to feel the Shade creep on,
And know my many-coloured dreams are gone,
Lost on the wind . . .

For all that I have loved will come with me
Into that quiet place,
And for one breathless space
I shall remember, and all that once was mine
Will wake the Gate of Death with light divine.
And I again shall know
The peace of driven snow
Lying under the moon,
Or flutter of restless wings
The springtime brings . . .
And all impassionedly
The scent of English sea.

HELEN M. MORRIS.

THE WEAK SPOT

By STEPHEN PHILLIPS

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

QUINN, in whose dark soul burned an inhuman hate of those pitiless white seas, drained the full noggin of liquor without the flicker of an eyelid.

"So the men think they've done enough killing, do they?" he remarked sarcastically. "They want to get back to their beds and their womenfolk, eh?"

Jelks, the toughened mate, shrugged his heavy shoulders.

"Well, I've a wife and kids myself," he mentioned reverently—"boy and two girls. Nice bright youngsters they are, too." He stared bleakly into Quinn's eyes—eyes which were like twin fragments of glittering black ice. "Beggin' your pardon," he concluded uneasily, "I think the men are in the right this time. It's a death-trap of a passage at the best of times, and now, with the winter gales just gatherin'——"

Quinn, sitting well back in his chair by the sliding-table, stared fixedly at the dark-glassed lantern swinging rhythmically overhead. The mate watched him with a kind of dumb desperation.

He hated Quinn.

Quinn, the skipper of the *Narwhal*, was a cold-blooded monster, whose only aim in life appeared to be the wholesale slaughter of the fat, defenceless seals which clustered everywhere in the low green fissures. Quinn, in the mate's estimation, was hardly human. A fierce, brooding passion had possession of him—a passion which at times flamed up to scorch and wither everyone and everything in its vicinity. Jelks had felt the searing heat of it more than once. So, also, had the others. They hated Quinn to a man—hated him from the very depths of their souls; while Quinn, utterly indifferent to their low threats and mutterings, drove them mercilessly to do his red, savage work.

Quinn looked down when the mate did not speak.

"If they got half a chance," he remarked coldly, "they'd murder me in my sleep. What are they grousing for now? Do they think they came out with me on a Sunday-school treat—or what?" He fixed his strange, glittering eyes on Jelks, who shifted his feet and muttered uneasily through his beard. "You consider yourselves a pretty tough crowd, don't you?" he sneered. "*Tough!* Why, I've met harder cases on a pleasure yacht!" He sat glaring at Jelks an instant, then snapped out viciously: "Get back on deck and keep her off the ice! Don't you know your job yet? Waiting for me to teach it you? Death-trap passage, is it? Well, then, swing yourself up aloft and see she doesn't hit something and drown the lot of us! You hear me talking now?"

The big mate took a sudden step forward, lifting his clenched fist as if he would strike it violently into that cold, sneering face. Noiselessly, out of the shadow behind Quinn's chair, something moved and rose. Jelks saw the red eyes glinting at him nakedly through the stream of yellow light. He drew back quickly, and Quinn laughed—a soft, gently appreciative, mirthless laugh.

"I fancy that dog never sleeps," he remarked cynically—"*never*."

Jelks shrugged his heavy shoulders with a strong disgust. He hardly knew which he hated the more—Quinn or his dog. It was a particularly savage beast, with the wolf strain in it, and the only person from whom it would take food was Quinn himself. The brute was never far from Quinn's heels, its red eyes flickering with veiled venom, its long, dripping, steel-trap jaws hanging wide apart, its heavy-packed shoulders oddly hunched, as if it were for ever meditating a sudden savage spring at some thick, sinewy throat. The sealers, who were religiously loyal to their own particular creed, hated Quinn's dog as much—perhaps even more—than they hated Quinn himself; and their hatred for Quinn, as he himself had just suggested in his cold, sneering fashion, would hardly have stopped short of murder—had they dared to attempt it.

Jelks swung on his heel and walked back to the companion, where he paused and

turned slowly, looking at Quinn, who still sat smiling coldly beneath the dark-glassed lantern.

"I warn you," said the mate fearfully, "you're driving the men too far! They won't stand it for ever! Why, it's sheer suicide takin' a ship through this passage when the winter gales are startin' to blow—sheer suicide!"

Quinn rose slowly to his feet and the mate backed away from him with a snarl of terror on his bearded mouth. At times, as he freely admitted, Quinn scared him stiff; and Jelks, who had spent practically a lifetime amid the frightful menace of those mad, pitiless Kerguelen seas, was not the kind of man to be easily scared. Quinn, however, was beyond his understanding altogether. Quinn was a cold-blooded monster; Quinn hated even as he himself was hated, and yet his terrible will was not to be broken or bent. Quinn feared neither man nor devil—or the wild, screaming fury of the elements with which they were always at death-grips. More than once Jelks had seen him look into the face of utter extinction with a cold, sneering smile—almost as if he mocked and jeered openly at the forces of destruction pitted against him.

Quinn's personality was terrible in its utter nakedness, and every man on that devil-driven ship moved surrounded by a dread which was almost unnatural. Jelks, who knew the physical texture as well as the mental calibre of the hard-grained, toil-worn crew, had formed the idea that little short of actual, brutal violence would ever mend matters.

Quinn, watching him now, read his thoughts. His hand made a snaky motion to his hip pocket and he slammed a small, ugly-nosed automatic on to the cabin table.

"Take a look at that," he invited coldly. "Warn them I go armed—and that I seldom miss."

Jelks flung round and stumbled back on deck, breathing deeply through his flaxen beard. The men clustered at the companion-head looked at him expectantly, but the big mate merely shook his head, moving carefully across the slippery, ice-encrusted deck towards the tiny wheelhouse, against which he stood with hunched shoulders, shivering through his thick fur garments, straining his sore, red-lidded eyes into the night, and cursing Quinn with amazing softness and fluency.

Quinn was enough to make any man curse; enough to outrage Fate itself by his cold, unnatural mockery of everything. And yet, although he was merely one among many, Quinn dominated the situation through the sheer ruthlessness of his character. He had put the very fear of Hades into the souls of those toughened sealers, each of whom had faced death a score of times with unflinching stoicism. There seemed to be no way of getting the better of Quinn—no way at all.

Quinn had no weak spot.

Jelks, sensing his own futility, and the futility of those about him, ground his strong thick teeth in the helplessness of his rage. Ever since terror of Quinn had come upon him like some dark, malignant disease, the mate had sought to discover some *flaw* in that unnaturally powerful body, that cold, fierce, mocking, unbridled temperament, where, seemingly, no flaw was to be found. The thing really frightened Jelks, for he had always imagined he knew something of men and their ways. Nearly every man, whatever strength of mind and character he might possess, had a *flaw*, a weakness somewhere. But Quinn apparently had none—no chink in the armour, no weak spot at all.

Two hours later Quinn came stamping on deck to take an observation, the devil-eyed hound at his heels, its steel-trap jaws dripping drops which froze brightly as they fell. Jelks, shivering with fear and rage against the wheelhouse door, saw that Quinn's face was even paler than usual.

"Where's the look-out?" he shouted suddenly.

"Three men for'ard, sir!" cried the mate huskily.

At that a very devil seemed to leap into Quinn's eyes.

"What's that? *For'ard*?" He flung the big mate from him across the frozen deck. "You bats! D'you think you can sail her blind in weather like this? Up aloft with you!"

He stood glaring round him through the falling ice-drops, while not a man moved.

From the background, where the sealers stood muttering sullenly, a voice spoke with sudden shrill defiance:

"*Murder*, it is!"

Quinn said nothing, but his face grew even paler with the savage fury which possessed him.

"We've families at home, some of us!"

"Aye, that's so—women watchin' and waitin'!"

Quinn looked at them. He spoke slowly, sneeringly.



" The big mate took a sudden step forward, lifting his clenched fist as if he would strike it violently into that cold, sneering face. Noiselessly, out of the shadow behind Quinn's chair, something moved and rose."

" Families ? Women watching and waiting, eh ? I thought you shipped with me to hunt seals. Well, get to it—*hunt* them ! " He reached out suddenly, gripping one of them by the throat. " Up aloft—*you* ! " He glared into the sealer's face. " Hear me ? Jump to it—or I'll make this ship a real floating hell for some of you ! "

Driven by some desperate terror, the man put hand to the knife in his belt. Quinn hardly seemed to move at all, but there was the sound of a bone snapping sharply and suddenly, and Jelks saw the sealer's arm hang limp and curiously twisted at his side.

Quinn smiled coldly.

" That will do," he said, with a terrible calm. " Don't let's have any more fuss now. We're going through as far as Desolation Creek. I'll find you seals there, plenty of them—nice fat ones." He made a reassuring gesture. " From now on every man will share and share alike, so put a check on your grousing, some of you, and get right down to it."

Cowed, they moved swiftly to do his bidding. Quinn stood motionless on the whitened deck, smiling coldly and furtively through the falling ice-drops. The mate, his heavy shoulders set once more against the wheelhouse door, watched him with fearful, fascinated eyes.

The schooner roared and rumbled, pitching under a double-reefed foresail. Terrible, snow-flurried seas, carrying with them all

the blinding bitterness of those frightful, frozen waters, came clattering and smashing over the rail each time the schooner dipped. Showers of frozen rain, whistling and beating shrilly into the face of the look-out high up in the stiffened white rigging, broke away the needle-pointed ice-particles and flung them against him, cutting flesh to the bone. Already the pressure of the pack-ice, set in motion by the winter gales, had started the Arctic floes breaking and twisting, writhing and curving with a hideous din—cleaving suddenly apart in fearful black leads.

The frozen rain ceased presently, and the curtain of the aurora swirled and eddied far beyond the immense fields of broken, sparkling ice. Its greenish light was flung almost unrealistically across Quinn's cold, savage white face. He turned, smiling thinly, to look at the big mate.

"So you've got a wife at home, have you?" he remarked gently. "Then I advise you to stand in with me—against these mutinous dogs—from now on."

"What's that?" stammered the mate, hardly comprehending.

Quinn thrust his face forward, his eyes glittering through the strange greenish light.

"If you want to see that wife of yours—*again*," he breathed.

Jelks stared after him, muttering fearfully in his beard, as Quinn walked slowly away across the freezing deck. A man-shaped devil was sailing the ship, of that the big mate was absolutely sure. Indeed, Quinn's passion for clubbing the fat, defenceless seals amounted almost to mania. He seemed to have no feeling, no pity, no humanity at all.

The big mate shivered again as he looked up. Armed with small hatchets, muttering fearfully, murder and terror sweeping together in their souls, the hardened crew chopped away the freezing whiteness from the weather rigging. Jelks stood and muttered the fragment of a prayer into his beard, wondering how long they had to live. It was a case of *blind* navigation now, or almost; for the *Narwhal* was beating up through the outer fringe of the gale, and thin clouds of snow, carried screaming on the high, piercing winds across the narrow channel, completely blocked visibility.

"Course is full-an'-bye!" yelled Quinn, creeping up very quietly behind the big mate and glaring sideways at him. "Can't you steer through a little bad weather like this? What's the matter with your tough crowd, eh?" He laughed jeeringly. "Not scared at all, are you—any of you? Thinking of the womenfolk—and the kids—I suppose! Letting yourselves get soft with such ideas!" He looked sick with disgust as he stood glaring about him. "Where d'you think you're steering us, eh?"

"To hell!" snarled the mate, suddenly losing all restraint and allowing his fear and rage to break loose.

He let go the wheel as Quinn advanced slowly on him, his face white with passion. Blindly, caught in the clutches of some horrible, unnameable terror, the mate struck out at that deadly white face. He felt his hard knuckles strike heavily against protruding bone. Quinn did not recoil. Slowly, terrifyingly, grinning with fury, Quinn's arms went round the mate's thick waist. Jelks felt his ribs being crushed beneath that awful pressure, and he flung sudden wild curses through his beard, at which Quinn only grinned the more.

"If you weren't so useful to me," said Quinn, his glittering eyes boring savagely into the mate's face, "I'd smash every particle of bone in your body."

With that, still grinning in that savage, unnatural fashion, he flung Jelks heavily against the wheelhouse door. The big, bearded mate slid down heavily on to his knees, while Quinn stood watching him, a cold, venomous smile on his thin lips. Slowly, trembling, Jelks picked himself up and stumbled back to the wheel, craven fear eating through his heart.

The schooner drove on through the blinding white night, swooping and staggering amid tempestuous seas, while Quinn, his fur collar pulled up round his small, delicate ears, walked the freezing deck like some restless Fate—and always, close at his heels, lurked the shadowy, sinister shape of Quinn's dog, its red eyes glinting through the snow-laden winds.

Presently, without speech, he turned and went below. Jelks, still quaking with some unmentionable dread, gave over the wheel to one of the crew and followed him slowly. Under the swinging, dark-glassed lantern, Quinn sat stroking the dog's head—fondling its ears and smiling almost humanly. Jelks clicked his teeth together in savage disgust at the spectacle. He had seen Quinn behaving like that before. It was a pity, the mate reflected, that Quinn did not reserve some of that gentleness, that consideration, for his own species. Quinn, who had an uncanny trick of reading a man's thoughts, looked up slowly.

"That dog's the only thing which has

ever taken a fancy to me—got really fond of me," he stated. "Queer, isn't it?"

Jelks only muttered incoherently in his beard as he turned to pick up the half-empty rum jar from which Quinn had been drinking steadily all the night.

Presently, Quinn's sneering smile getting on his nerves, he burst into speech:

"Are you actually intendin' to take this ship right through the passage?"

"I am," said Quinn, sitting motionless and watchful.

"It's sheer murder, then!" The mate's voice rose in shrilly enraged accusation. "You called the men soft just now, but that's not true! They're hard as most of their kind! They've women and children to think of—who'll go hungry if anything should happen to them——"

"I've heard all that before," remarked Quinn impatiently. "They've no right to be feeling homesick out here on this ship."

The big mate held himself in with an effort. He spoke with forced calmness.

"It's not a question of feelin' *homesick*. It's——" He glanced nervously at the swinging light, and Quinn, watching him, smiled contemptuously. "It's that none of us exactly relish the idea of having our lives—cast away!" he added, with a kind of desperate defiance.

Quinn rose slowly to his feet.

"Who talks of casting away your lives?" he asked harshly. "If I drown you, I drown myself as well. Bear that in mind, will you."

The mate bared his teeth.

"Yes, but you—you're not the kind that drowns *easy*!" he hissed out.

Quinn laughed without merriment.

"Oh, indeed," he drawled, "the knowledge of such comparative immunity should prove reassuring, at least." Then, in an instant, his expression changed, and he reached out, clutching the mate's shoulder. "Get to Hades up on deck and keep her off the ice—if you want to see your wife and children again!"

Jelks flew from that presence like a man pursued by some unnatural dread. It was better on deck, icy cold though it was, than to remain anywhere near that man-shaped fiend.

Ever-thickening walls of ice now enveloped the weather rigging. The schooner roared and swooped like some wild creature, her narrow timbers pulling and screeching dementedly; and the heavy black seas, sweeping up dizzily out of the heart of those freezing solitudes, flung themselves at her with a rattling, staggering din which made the souls of those hardened sealers sweat genuine terror. At intervals a splitting report would go echoing and re-echoing through the unholy darkness of the night, as the floating ice-fields split jaggedly asunder—either behind or before them, Jelks could hardly ever tell which. He knew only that death—sudden and awful disintegration—lurked waiting for them on every side.

Quinn knew it, too. But through it all Quinn, the monster, remained detached and remote, utterly indifferent, crouching low beneath the dark-glassed lantern, staring fixedly into space, moving sometimes to stroke the dog's head or fondle its long, cruel ears. No one on board the *Narwhal* ever knew anything of the promptings, the insistent urge in that strange, warped mind—or the reason for Quinn's hate; for Quinn's hatred of those freezing white seas amounted almost to madness. They had taken kith and kin from him—the only two people in all the world he had ever loved; and now the only zest Quinn ever got out of life came directly from the perils and uncertainties of his savage, pitiless fight with them—his robbing and despoiling, his fierce, mocking defiance of them.

Leaning against the wheelhouse door, expecting every plunge of the little schooner would prove her last, Jelks saw four indistinct, shadowy forms loom up for an instant against the swinging gleam of the binnacle-light. Swinging past them, the gleam sped on, but the figures remained, still indistinct, still shadowy. Jelks watched them with furtive fear. The white wind, ceasing its shrill scream for an instant, permitted the low muttering of their voices to reach him. Lifting his big, cramped body, the mate moved slowly towards them. As the binnacle-light, high in the whitened rigging, swung back again, Jelks saw the expressions on their faces, and he stood still on the frozen deck, his fingers twisted agitatedly in his flaxen beard, for the tough, toil-hardened mate of the *Narwhal* did not relish the thought of creeping like guilty assassins upon a sleeping man, even though the man was Quinn and therefore deserving of very little consideration.

Spruit, who had done service on northern whale-ships ever since he was a boy, lunged at the mate, a knife glinting between his blunt fingers, spitting out words which seemed to strike a greater chill than ever through the big mate's soul.

He stood back, his face working, the falling ice-drops rattling eerily against the deck at his feet. More than once, on that devil-driven ship, Jelks had toyed with such an idea—the killing of Quinn; but always his soul had shrunk from the thing as if from something altogether hideous, like an unholy nightmare. He felt his big body sweating and trembling.

"Rather than go without his skins, he'd see our women begging their bread in the street gutters!" snarled Spruit, flourishing the knife between his fingers. "Come on, you chaps! Tread soft—and be ready for that devil-eyed dog of his!"

Jelks drew in his breath with a little hiss as he watched the four grim-faced sealers creep furtively towards the companion-head. The swinging gleam of the binnacle-light glinted oddly for an instant against the naked steel in Spruit's hand, and Jelks drew back with another shudder of repulsion. Much as he feared and hated Quinn, this kind of thing made him sick.

The four sealers had vanished and Jelks stood there shaking like a leaf, with the frozen rain beating through the rigging into his face, bruising and cutting the toughened skin, though he heeded it not. Suddenly he turned and leapt towards the companion-head, shouting some strange, husky warning to the man below, and, in that instant, pistol shots blazed out, and he heard Quinn's cold, mocking voice, his venomous, jeering laughter, the snarling and snapping and clashing of teeth, the ugly, hysterical shouting of men fighting tooth and claw, their souls sick with dread. The mate drew hastily back, breathing in quick, jerky gulps, as the four sealers, their eyes blazing with some unearthly terror, came flying and tumbling up the steel-studded companion, clutching at torn and wounded limbs—followed, through the shrill scream of the wind, by Quinn's unholy laughter.

Seized by passionate hate, the mate flung himself down the stairway, to stand mouthing in speechless fury at Quinn, who was kneeling on the cabin floor beside the dog. Its shaggy coat was stained redly. Quinn looked up, his face distorted with fury.

"I'd like to know which of them used his knife on that dog," he ground out. "Fill that basin with water, will you, and get the roll of lint from my chest. Shake some life into yourself!"

Jelks' mouth was dry, his teeth chattered, and he muttered fearfully through his beard as he swung on his heel, the basin in his hand. Quinn laughed coldly and flung the empty pistol across the cabin.

"I've no more cartridges," he sneered. "Tell them so, if you like."

From that moment it seemed as if a more relentless devil than ever had taken possession of Quinn. He spent hours hunched up beside the sliding-table, seldom speaking, his eyes occasionally straying from a fixed, baleful glare to rest almost pityingly upon the wounded beast beneath his bunk. That was the only time Jelks ever saw real pity in Quinn's eyes—and the thing gave him an inward shock, for it seemed only to add to the unnaturalness of the man they all hated and longed—yet feared—to destroy.

Black terror brooded over that ship as she thrashed and churned her way ever deeper into those frightful, berg-strewn seas. Quinn seemed to have discarded all principles of navigation. Rarely did he venture on deck, and when he did so his usually pallid face was flushed with liquor and his gait unsteady. The sealers, urged by Jelks, set double-watches, and alternately prayed and cursed, while the *Narwhal* thrashed and rattled her way towards the Crozets, swept by tumbling grey seas, blinded by screaming, howling snow-flurries, tossed hither and thither, a thin, insignificant, white-plastered fragment sweeping and reeling and rushing through chaos complete and absolute.

The big mate, clinging to the wheel, was the first to sight that awesome *something* through the whirling snow-flurries. He sprang back, staring with a terrible fascination—a fascination in which unbelief was blended with dreadful certainty. Somewhere he heard Quinn's voice—Quinn who had appeared suddenly, silently, as if from nowhere. But even Quinn's superb seamanship could not save the schooner in that awesome moment.

"Owls!" he shrieked. "Blink your eyes and see it!" He jumped across the deck, his fists striking right and left in demoniacal fury. "Let go all head-sheets, curse you!"

Sweating with terror, cursing and screaming, they hauled on the heavy main-boom, with Quinn raving like a maniac on the frozen deck; and yet, before the head-sheets could be raised, the *Narwhal* struck with a frightful, splintering crash, the terrific force of which flung all but Quinn off their feet. At that, for some reason, the unnatural fury died quickly out of Quinn. The schooner, her forefoot torn utterly from her sturdy

little frame, was filling—and sinking as she filled. The sea, sweeping her decks, had taken boat, mast, and galley with it. Quinn, having choked down his awful fury, worked like a madman with frozen lines, to which were attached provisions and a beaker of water. The sealers, working feverishly beside him, cursed him bitterly for a murderer and worse. Of them and their savage abuse Quinn took very little notice, except to smile—a slow, frightfully grim, altogether forbidding sort of smile.

He took the ends of the lines himself, fastened them tightly round his waist, and plunged over the side, striking out savagely for the shore. The sealers watched him with eyes in which hate and a kind of despairing admiration were blended curiously. Man-shaped monster though he was, few of them could withhold due respect for Quinn's hardihood, his utter defiance and mockery, his disregard of all those dark, naked things which struck fierce dread into their own strong hearts. Contemptuous of death, fearless of mutilation, his dark spirit strengthened by the savage hate which possessed him, in that instant Quinn revealed himself as the absolute master of men, manufacturing to some degree his own ill-starred destiny, gripping Fate by the muscles of the neck, strangling.

Indomitably, through murderous wreckage splitting and rending from the schooner as the giant combers rolled her up, tearing out her bilge in a series of sickening crashes, Quinn fought his way to the low, slippery rocks, scrambling and falling as he carried higher the frozen lines to wind them frantically about the smooth ridges of the blackened rock. But the sealers, driven by rage and terror, only spat out savage curses at him, wishing he would strike his head and drown. His voice came back to them in a frenzied shriek, and at that they laughed and cursed at him the more, save for Jelks, who was too busy to hate, which is a man's whole-time occupation.

The schooner was going to pieces beneath their feet, and they pushed and struggled and fought madly, with thoughts of those women begging bread in the streets. Some, plunging into the icy seas, clutching at driftwood, screaming murderous threats at the man perched on the rock above them. Jelks was the last to leave, and they rescued him from the fierce maw of the sea with two broken fingers, the pain of which, in that freezing climate, was a frightful, maddening thing. Quinn sprang in among them, lashing them with a bitter, hating tongue, crouching for shelter where no shelter was to be found.

"Where's that dog?" he almost screamed.

They laughed and jeered at that, gladdened yet astonished by the wild, brilliant appeal in his eyes. And so they stood cursing him loudly as he plunged back into the icy maw of the sea, battling like a madman; and they shouted and yelled with outrageous ecstasy when a sharp fragment of floating timber laid his cheek open to the bone. Bloodstained, wild-looking, dishevelled, Quinn reached the sinking ship, crawling and slipping across her decks, which were already awash. For a time he seemed to vanish, and the shivering castaways, hating him, hoped that the inwashing seas had clutched and drowned him, for the dog, they thought, must have been trapped in the cabin when the schooner struck.

But Quinn, as the mate had said, did not belong to the kind that drowns easily. His powerful, bloodstained figure reappeared, was lost to sight again as he dropped quickly into the midst of the floating wreckage, and, behind him, the schooner sank for ever to the bottom of those icy seas with a sound like a giant choking.

Quinn nearly died with her, and the sealers, clustering like dark, misshapen ants along the low shore, flung taunts and insults at him, telling each other to let the man-shaped devil drown—he who had cast them up upon this frozen hell to die in bleak, sordid misery.

The big mate, his mouth oddly twisted at the edges with agony, limped across the ledge and stood glaring down into Quinn's face as he lay there panting like a dying man, the blood pouring and freezing from the wicked gash in his cheek. Beside him on the smooth black rock crouched Quinn's dog, which snarled and snapped and gnashed its fangs at Jelks as he approached, sensing apparently his hostile mood. The rest of the sealers, their faces twisted with hate, began to move slowly along the shore towards that prostrate form. Spruit, his eyes black with new wickedness, had plucked the heavy sheath-knife from his belt. He held it between his teeth as he waded through the icy water beneath the ledge on which Quinn was lying.

Quinn saw him coming and rose on his knees, grinning his defiance. Spruit leapt upward, snatched at the ledge with numbed, twisted hands, pulling his cold, bruised body painfully over its sharpened edge. From

his kneeling position, Quinn rose slowly, a sharp wedge of timber in his hand.

"*Murderer!*" Spruit spat at him. "What of our womenfolk now? Are they to beg their bread in the street gutters for such as you?"

He slashed at Quinn's throat with the knife, but Quinn caught his wrist in a clutch of steel, grinning into his face with diabolical ferocity. Slowly, inexorably, Spruit's thick fingers relaxed their murderous clutch on the steel, and the knife fell with a little tinkling sound to the bottom of the ledge. With a savage grimace, Quinn flung the big sealer from him as if he were a child, springing round upon the mate, his eyes blazing, his black hair all wild and dishevelled, his powerful, steel-sprung body all a-quiver with suppressed hate. The mate stepped back hurriedly, almost toppling over the side of the ledge in sheer terror. Quinn, his face working oddly, waited for the rest, the wedge of timber lifted above his head.

They paused when they saw him up there and drew back, muttering, scowling, while Quinn grinned down upon them almost invitingly, and Jelks himself stood utterly irresolute, swayed by all manner and conditions of emotion, the precise nature of which he hardly knew.

"Well, what are you all standing around for?" he demanded suddenly. "Why don't you come up and get it over? I'm only one against a dozen, you know. Haven't you enough pluck for that?"

Their low mutterings subsided rather stupidly; they stood looking askance at that terrible, blood-stained figure, while, with a little shrug of contempt, Quinn slowly lowered the wedge of timber, moving back to seat himself on the ledge behind, his glittering eyes watching them unwinkingly, with bright venom and suspicion, but always without the least semblance of fear.



Presently the men went away and began to collect what salvage they could from the wreckage of the sea. Quinn watched their futile endeavours, his thin lips sneering, his hand fondling the dog's long ears, his thick, soddened furs stiffening on his body. With



"From his kneeling position, Quinn rose slowly, a sharp wedge of timber in his hand. '*Murderer!*' Spruit spat at him."

some difficulty, the sealers kindled a fire on the shore in order to drive the cold, creeping death from their poor maimed, bruised bodies. They watched Quinn furtively; and presently, flinging down the wedge of timber, he rose and walked slowly to the blaze. None of them spoke a word to him, and Quinn, his strangely brilliant eyes fixed in the red flames, seemed to take no manner of notice of them at all. Even in that dire, pitiful extremity, Quinn's personality dominated them through its sheer savagery and wildness. They could have brained him as he stood there amongst them, but not a man had the daring or the courage to attempt it.

When they had eaten, Quinn said slowly:

"Good job the mains'l was cut adrift. It'll serve as a shelter for some of us, at least." He felt in his pocket and produced a small wrist-compass. "No use sitting around too long. I think we've hit the mainland by some odd chance. If we strike due south, that should bring us to Jansen's Cove, warm fires, snug quarters, and lots of grub. Up with you all and be doing! Don't forget it's a ten days' trek!"

Jelks looked at him.

"We take no more orders from you," he said slowly and deliberately. "Hand over that compass. I'll wear it myself."

"Oh, *well*," said Quinn, with a cold sneer.

The big mate looked round at the ring of hard, savage faces.

"It's a case of each man for himself and the devil take the hindmost!" he exclaimed, with a short, bitter laugh. "Each one of us shares and shares alike in what grub's left. There's thirteen of us all told now."

"An unhappy omen," commented Quinn, grinning at them with livid lips.

"You keep your ghastly jokes for a more fitting moment!" cried Jelks, who was a superstitious man.

Quinn bent to fondle the dog's ears, and Jelks watched him through narrowed eyes, marvelling at his peculiar gentleness. The big mate was still a curious mixture of emotion. Quinn, cold-blooded monster that he was, had risked his life without hesitation to go back to the sinking ship for that devil-eyed dog of his. Nature was altogether an odd thing, reflected the mate.

He stamped round—and at that Quinn spoke, not looking up.

"Thirteen of us, did you say? How's that? I make it *fourteen*—fourteen mouths to find food and drink for."

"Thirteen, I said!" retorted the mate sharply. "What's in your mind now?" And then, staring at Quinn's bent head, he seemed to understand. "You don't think we're going to take the food out of our own mouths in order to feed that dog of yours, do you?" he asked, aghast at the thought.

Quinn straightened himself slowly, looking round to meet sharp, hate-filled eyes. He opened his mouth as if to speak, then shut it again with a little click of his strong white teeth—sensing, apparently, the futility of words.

The men got up and marched sullenly, in dead silence, ignoring Quinn, whom they looked upon as a particularly reprehensible specimen of the cold-blooded murderer type. Quinn seemed to read their thoughts in his quite uncanny fashion. He knew they meant to have his life for what he had done whenever a proper opportunity offered itself. It was only that strange, unnameable dread of the man which kept them from springing at him and tearing him limb from limb. But, if he were at all conscience-stricken, Quinn certainly revealed no sign of it. He followed them at a distance—two odd, savage figures, Quinn and his dog.

It was towards the end of the second day that Jelks began to take particular notice of Quinn. He stood in the firelight, chewing a lump of leather which he had cut from a strap, and the big mate made odd, furtive faces at the stillness all about, for a peculiar notion had entered his head. All next day, through that white, fierce, pitiless land, he marched with the idea, pausing sometimes when he came to higher ground to cast a furtive glance backward—and always, two lone wild figures amid the startling whiteness of those far-flung solitudes, he saw Quinn and his dog.

That night Quinn sat apart from the others, chewing another lump of leather, and smiling—a cold, fixed smile. Jelks watched his face, perceiving its suddenly haggard expression, and the bones which were beginning to stick out with such odd prominence.

Next day, instead of eating, he saw Quinn put another hitch in his belt, and Jelks understood.

"The man's not eatin'," he said.

Spruit looked up.

"What d'you mean—not eating?"

"Just what I say," explained the mate, shrugging his heavy shoulders in a kind of bewilderment. "He's givin' his share of the grub to that devil-eyed dog of his—or the better part of it, anyhow!"

The word went round in hushed undertones and the sealers exchanged uglily significant glances.

They had found Quinn's weak spot.

At the end of the fifth day Jelks, looking back for an instant, saw Quinn picking himself slowly from the hardened snow. He walked with a curious little lurch, hardly lifting his heavy seal-boots, his face as grim—and colourless—as death itself.

"Presently he'll drop behind and die, and that's the best thing that could happen to him," thought Jelks.

Sometimes the big mate glanced rather curiously at the men who marched so sullenly and noiselessly at his side. They reminded him of lost wolves, waiting patiently. . . .

Yet the seventh day found Quinn still clinging to their heels, doggedly, savagely, grinning defiance at Fate—and at themselves. His very attitude seemed to provoke a fresh sense of irritation, of fierce injustice, in the souls of those tired, marching men. They began to look back more frequently at Quinn and his dog—but Quinn and his dog were always there to disappoint them.

With the conclusion of the eighth day their patience had worn itself out.

They turned like one man and went back. Their terror of Quinn had gone. They had no fear of him now—only hate.

Quinn hadn't a chance against them. He was so weak that he could hardly stand on his two feet. His once powerful, steel-sprung body was like the wasted wreckage of the sea, shrivelled with hunger and the bitter, savage cold. His eyes were sunken deep in their shadow-rimmed sockets, and the wild, terrifying fire had died in them, like flame suddenly extinguished. Yet, through that dying, withered husk, the soul of the man remained unconquered and unconquerable, flickering embers touched to a life immutable by the clear, noiseless strength of spiritual winds.

They paused and looked at him, rather with that kind of vivid horror with which people view the condemned criminal in his narrow-walled cell.

"Well," said Quinn hollowly, "what are you waiting for? Why don't you do what you've come to do?"

And at that, so odd a thing is human nature, hate oozed from the souls of the men who had come with the killing-lust in their hearts, and mercy, inexplicable, took its place. Perhaps, like the mercy of God, it asked a divine intelligence for its absolute understanding.

"We came," said Jelks, in a queer, husky voice, "to tell you that we've divided the grub into fourteen shares. Call it superstition or what you like, it seems to us that thirteen's just mockin' at Providence, and—well, that—that's all."

And when the short grey day faded, and the splintering stars hung down, two lone, wild, savage shapes still clung patiently to the heels of those marching men—Quinn and his dog.

SUPERLATIVE.

LAST week, quite suddenly, I fell in
Love with a glorious maid named Ellen.
Ours were twin souls together blent.
She had a soulful temperament
And (this is banal I confess)
A very pretty taste in dress.
Her eyes were blue; her teeth were white;
Her hair was quite convincing—quite;
Her mouth was like a Cupid's bow,
(Touched up with lip-stick? Oh dear no!)
Pre-emptive merit seemed to dwell in her,
Or so I thought till I met Eleanor,
Whose soul I sense as still more mystic,
Whose broad effects are more artistic,
Whose complexes are more obscure,
Whose eyes (if possible) are bluer.
More devastating are her frocks,
More flaxen are her shingled locks,
More regular her pearl-like teeth,
More dimpled is the chin beneath.
She's like a priceless bit of Chelsea
Or Dresden—or Miss Lily Elsie.
Oh, what a splendid thing 'twould be
If Eleanor belonged to me,
Or (which perhaps would suit me best)
If I could meet an Ellenest!

C. W. WESTRON.

THE SWEET BRIAR HEDGE

By RICHMAL CROMPTON

ILLUSTRATED BY E. WELCH RIDOUT

THE sweet briar hedge had always seemed to Miriam to typify the peace and love and happiness and security of her married life. It grew at the bottom of the garden, just beyond the roses. She and John had planted it when they returned from their honeymoon ten years ago. It had grown, like her love, stronger and more fragrant with the years. She remembered that a sudden chill misgiving had come to her as she was planting it. . . . Would she in later years look back on that day with bitterness? Would the hedge remind her of the freshness of her love when her love lay dead and faded? Would she ever come to hate the sweet briar hedge that she and John had planted together that day? She had feared what the years would bring her, and they had brought her nothing but good. They had brought a strengthening of her love, a deepening of her understanding. The very cares they brought her had been precious ones.

For it would, of course, all have been less perfect if they hadn't had children. She could see the children now playing near the sweet briar hedge—Jimmy, who was nine, slim and slender, with a mop of golden curls; Billy, smaller and sturdier and more solemn; Rosemary, the baby, fat and dimpled, taking her first unsteady steps with Nurse in close attendance.

John wasn't at all the sort of man she'd imagined herself loving when she was a girl. There was little of the dashing hero of romance about John. He was very quiet and unassuming, but he was unfailingly kind and gentle and patient and understanding. She knew that the one reality in his life was his love for her, just as the one reality in her life was her love for him.

The sound of Jimmy's laugh—sweet and clear—came to her through the summer air, followed by Billy's fat chuckle. They were chasing each other round the sweet briar hedge. Rosemary, sitting now on a rug, pulling up grass with fat dimpled hands, laughed too, just because they were laughing. She stood and worshipped them with her eyes and worshipped John in them.

She was not always, of course, as sharply conscious of her happiness as this. Generally it was just a shining background to her thoughts, a radiant undercurrent to all the trivial events of the day; but to-day was a special day. It was the anniversary of her wedding. Always on this day her happiness seemed to crystallise into a golden glow, and become almost more than she could bear. Her thoughts went back over the ten years of her marriage, went back further to her first meeting with John.

She'd known that John was a widower before she met him. Common friends had told her all about his first unhappy marriage, about the pretty, extravagant, pleasure-loving wife who had been, as it were, a dead weight round his neck throughout the beginning of his career. She had spent his money like water. Her debts were a legend in her set. He had been so crippled, so handicapped by her that he had almost given up hope. She was vain and untrustworthy. There were rumours that she was unfaithful. And yet there had been something pathetic in her death. John had gone to Spain on business and she had accompanied him in vague hopes of the "good time" that was her constant demand of life, and the boat had been wrecked just off the coast. Neither of their names had been in the first list of survivors, but John had been picked up nearly two days later. Ella had never been heard of again. There

had been no doubt at all that she was among the drowned. Though the ship was wrecked near the coast, all those who were washed to land were dashed to pieces on the rocks. . . .

The children's shouts recalled her from her day-dreams. They were still playing round the sweet briar hedge. She gave herself a little shake as if to dispel her memories. She very seldom thought about John's first wife. She hated to think of his unhappiness. Yet she was secure in the knowledge of his present happiness. She'd made amends to him for all the unkindnesses Ella had ever dealt him.

She glanced at the clock. She must hurry. She had to go into town to do some shopping and she wanted to get it done quickly and be home before John came back from work. He was coming home early because it was the anniversary of their wedding day.

She stepped out on to the lawn. Jimmy and Billy left the sweet briar hedge and ran to her in welcome. Rosemary toddled up to her, stretching out dimpled arms. The golden radiance of happiness flooded her heart again.

She finished her shopping much earlier than she had expected and went to sit in the Park for a few minutes before going to the station. It was a lovely summer's day and she was rather tired with her shopping. She'd have to wait at the station for her train, so she thought she might as well wait here. The golden glow of happiness was still over her. She had done her shopping in a kind of radiant dream. She sat staring unseeingly in front of her—vaguely, gratefully aware of the sunshine and the trees about her, but seeing none of the passers-by—seeing only Jimmy and Billy and Rosemary and John, John, John. . . .

It was some time before she realised that she was not alone. A woman was sitting at the other end of the seat—also staring unseeingly in front of her. She was a furtive, painted creature of the streets, with the marks of evil living plainly written upon her face. She was dressed with the defiant tawdriness of her kind. Her eyes were hard and shadowed and slightly bloodshot, her reddened mouth was loose. There was something repellent about her. Ordinarily Miriam would have got up and moved away as soon as she noticed her, but to-day her heart held no room for either scorn or shrinking. The consciousness of her own happiness gave her a kind of humility in the presence of this battered unfortunate. Her love transmuted itself into pity and flowed out to her in a golden stream. Besides—something about the face—she didn't know what it was—seemed vaguely familiar. She spoke impulsively:

"Good afternoon. Isn't it a lovely day?"

The woman turned hard bloodshot eyes on her in surprise.

"Is it?" she said; then, "What's the game? Are you out for copy, or is it a pi. stunt? Rescuing the fallen and that sort of thing?"

She spoke with a sneer. Her voice, though thick and with the hoarseness of the habitual drunkard, had a cultured accent. Miriam was already regretting her impulsive friendliness, but having yielded to it did not wish to retreat.

"Neither," she said pleasantly. "I just wanted to speak to someone. That's all."

The woman glanced at her again.

"I thought perhaps you were a novelist," she said, still with a sneer, "trying to pick up a bit of copy. There's a lot of them about. I've no objection if they're willing to pay for it, but I don't give anyone anything for nothing." Her eye, shrewd despite its suspicion of bleariness, passed up and down Miriam's figure. "No, I can see you're not, now. You haven't got the look. Husband and children more in your line, isn't it?"

"Yes. How did you know?"

The woman laughed—an unpleasant laugh.

"You can always tell them. Satisfied. Looking down on everyone else. Thinking out the next day's menu."

"I'm not looking down on anyone and I'm not thinking out to-morrow's menu," said Miriam slowly, "but I am happy."

"I had a husband once," said the woman defiantly. "I was one of you. I wasn't much happier then than I am now."

A cloud had passed over the sun. Miriam felt suddenly cold. She shivered.

"Cold?" said the woman.

"No. Someone walking over my grave," said Miriam, with a strained, unnatural laugh. She had an impulse to get up and go away, but she resisted it.

"Why did you leave your husband?" she said. "Weren't you happy with him?"

The woman laughed again—that harsh, mirthless laugh.

"I didn't leave him. He was drowned."

"Drowned?"

The world was growing colder, darker. The cloud still hid the sun.



"Yes. We were shipwrecked on the way to Spain. He was drowned."

"On the way to Spain. How curious! My husband was once shipwrecked on the way to Spain. His first wife was drowned."

"Same boat, I expect," said the woman,



"With trembling fingers she took out all she could find—fifteen pounds in notes and some silver, and handed them to the woman."

without much interest. "A lot of them were drowned. It was a beastly night. The wonder is any of us were saved."

A strange cold feeling of apprehension was creeping over Miriam. Her heart was beating unevenly. She didn't want to hear any more about the shipwreck, but some irresistible force drove her on to question the woman further.

"You're—sure your husband was drowned?"

The woman looked at her in surprise.

"Of course. I saw the list of survivors. John's name wasn't in it."

John . . . a sick panic was sweeping over her . . . it couldn't be . . . it couldn't be . . . John . . . there were hundreds of Johns in the world. Hundreds of people had been shipwrecked off the coast of Spain. . . . She wanted to get up and run away, covering her ears with her hands . . . and yet she had to stay . . . she must know . . . she couldn't go on living with this dreadful doubt, this awful suspicion in her heart. . . . The irresistible force drove her on again. She steadied herself and said:

"Wasn't he among those saved later?"

The woman looked at her doubtfully.

"What do you mean? I just saw one list of survivors in a newspaper. His name wasn't in that. I didn't see any other papers for months. I was ill."

A black mist was coming over her eyes. She struggled against the nausea, clenching her fists till the nails dug into her palms and the knuckles looked like bare bone. Gradually the mist cleared again.

"Was—your name among the survivors?" she said in a strange, unnatural voice.

The woman laughed.

"No, it wasn't. I can't think even now why I wasn't killed. I was nearly cut to pieces by the rocks, but I wasn't killed. I was thrown on to the shore and I managed to get to an old woman's cottage. She was half mad and half blind and half deaf, but she looked after me all right."

"She—told no one about you?"

"She was miles out of the town. I was too ill to think of it. When I got well it didn't seem worth while. I never believed in waking sleeping dogs—not me—not Ella."

Ella . . . Ella . . . and suddenly that faint elusive likeness became clear to her. It was the photograph John had once shown her of his first wife. The stupendous, incredible truth came to her. This woman was John's first wife. . . . No, not John's first wife . . . John's wife. She wasn't John's wife at all . . . she'd never been John's wife. . . . The black mist was coming over her again. She fought it back. Desperately, unsteadily, she said:

"But surely you—you told your people—his people—in England afterwards that you were safe?"

The woman shot her a furtive, mirthless smile.

"Not for me—not for Ella. Debts, my dear. I'd left hundreds of them. John hadn't a penny but his salary. That was small enough. He was an engineer." Again the black mist surged over Miriam, again her heart beat so deafeningly that for a minute she couldn't hear what the woman was saying. "What he left wouldn't have paid half my debts. I didn't know much about the law, but I was pretty sure they'd have been down on me for my debts. It seemed rather a good chance to cut free and start again"—she winked slowly—"so I let it rest. John's people were all poor as church mice. No use going to them. An awful crowd, too. And I'd none of my own. I didn't mean to come back to England. I went to Monte Carlo and I met a man there," the painted face flickered evilly. "Rolling—he could have kept me the rest of my life without feeling it. But—you know what men are. I don't know why I'm telling you all this. He got tired of me and left me. Like all the others. But I stayed out there for six years. Then I came back to England. A woman's got to live," she ended defiantly, turning the hot bloodshot eyes upon Miriam.

There was a silence. Miriam was clinging to the seat with both hands, fighting against a feeling of physical sickness. At last she said:

"How long ago was this wreck?"

Her voice seemed to her to be a whisper coming from far away. It didn't seem to belong to her at all.

The woman shot her a curious glance.

"What's the matter with you?" she said. "Still thinking of your husband's first wife? D'you wish she'd never been drowned? How long ago was this wreck? I dunno. I don't keep a diary. It must have been eleven or twelve years ago now."

Eleven or twelve years ago. It all fitted in. . . . She must ask now what the woman's married name had been . . . what her single name had been . . . but she wouldn't . . . she wouldn't . . . she wouldn't . . . it all fitted together so



"When John came back, she said without turning round: 'Will you do something for me?'"

relentlessly . . . she wouldn't ask that final question that would leave no doubt in her mind. . . . She fought against the something that seemed to hound her on . . . she wouldn't ask it . . . she wouldn't know . . . she wouldn't know . . . she bit her lip till the blood came.

"Are you ill?" said the woman, still looking at her curiously.

"No."

Then suddenly she tore open her bag. She'd a good deal of money with her. With trembling fingers she took out all she could find—fifteen pounds in notes and some silver, and handed them to the woman. The woman stared at her with amazement, her loose lips hanging open.

"You *are* balmy," she said slowly. "I thought you were all the time." Then she snatched at the money and fled with it away into the crowd.

Miriam sat where she was, staring in front of her, her face a grey mask. The whole world was black with horror. There was a singing in her ears, a mist before her eyes; her heart-beats were like hammer-strokes. The thing was true. She *knew* that it was true. That woman was John's wife. She was not John's wife. There seemed to come to her suddenly, as if borne on the breeze, a faint fragrance as of sweet briar . . . the sweet briar hedge . . . the sanctity and peace and happiness and security of her home . . . all that was dear to her . . . Jimmy, Billy, Rosemary . . . Again the wave of sickness swept over her . . . they had no right to John's name . . . they were —what was the hateful word?—bastards. And John . . . she must go to John at once. She must tell him of this horrible thing. They must talk it over, decide what to do. She must go home at once. Perhaps John would be there now. . . . She must tell him at once. She tried to stand, but her knees were too unsteady. She felt as if she were in the throes of a nightmare. She prayed that it might be a nightmare, that she might wake up, but she knew it wasn't. As soon as she felt steadier she rose, walked quickly out of the Park and hailed a taxi. Her one aim now was to find John and tell him.

She walked very slowly up the country road from the station to her home. Her mind wasn't quite so paralysed by the horror now. She could think. She could imagine something of the effect of this news upon John. His honour was almost morbidly sensitive. He took all his responsibilities very seriously. He'd have the woman traced, of course, first of all. She was his wife and he must find her, provide for her. He was a fairly rich man now, though he'd been poor enough when she married him. He'd feel responsible for her in every way. Quixotic and chivalrous, he'd take that leaden weight again upon his back. She was his wife. And—suppose they couldn't trace her? There must be hundreds of such derelict women in the underworld. Would they go on as they had been doing? They couldn't. . . . All the peace and joy and safety would be gone. She wasn't John's wife. John's wife was that painted woman of the underworld with her loose lips and bloodshot eyes. She'd always be between them now. Neither of them would be able to forget her—never for a moment. And suppose he found her—what then? What would it mean for Jimmy and Billy and Rosemary? What would it mean for her?

She had turned the corner of her road now. She could see the little house and garden. She could see the sweet briar hedge. Slowly, draggingly, she approached the gate. Jimmy saw her, called out to the others, and came leaping to meet her. She bent down to them, snatching up Rosemary and burying her face in her dimpled fragrance to hide her emotion from them, laughing because otherwise she would have cried. And all the time she could see the loose lips and the bloodshot eyes of John's wife, hear her thin, mirthless laugh. All the time her heart was saying to her: "You aren't John's wife. You're his mistress."

"Has Daddy come home?" she said. No, they said, he hadn't come home yet.

She wanted to escape to her bedroom, but she couldn't bear to leave them. She went with them down to the bottom of the garden where was the sweet briar hedge. She wanted to breath its healing fragrance. She stood by it, still holding Rosemary in her arms. It seemed to pour peace and strength into her heart.

She'd taken off her hat and coat. She stood in her bedroom looking down at the sweet briar hedge in the garden. John hadn't come in yet. She felt rested, her nerves steadier. After all—why worry John about it? It was a coincidence and nothing more . . . John . . . Ella . . . common enough names . . . she hadn't asked for surnames—perhaps her surname would have been quite different . . .

Wrecks . . . one heard of wrecks every day . . . and the woman had seemed vague as to the exact time . . . An engineer . . . there were probably hundreds of engineers called John who had wives called Ella. . . . Why worry John? Why not forget this afternoon altogether? Why not, for Jimmy's and Billy's and Rosemary's sake, forget this afternoon altogether? And yet she knew that she could never do that.

She heard the key in the lock.

"Darling?"

It was his voice, loving, impatient. It said: "Where are you? I can't wait a minute longer than I must before I see you." She flung a glance at her reflection in the glass. It looked pale, but composed. It bore no trace of the searing horror of the afternoon. She went very slowly downstairs to him.

He'd got a present for her, of course. He always brought home a present for her on this anniversary. And because it was the tenth it was a specially handsome one—a long jade necklace. She admired it, thanked him, tried it on, glad of the diversion. It put off the moment when she must decide finally what to say to him. She still wasn't quite sure even yet what she was going to say. She still felt dazed and bewildered. It was the children's bedtime. He took them up to nurse, Rosemary in his arms, Billy on his back and Jimmy trotting by his side. He was an ideal father.

She stood alone in the drawing-room by the window, the jade necklace in her hand. But she wasn't looking at the necklace. She was looking at the sweet briar hedge.

When he came back, she said without turning round:

"John."

"Yes, dear."

"Do you remember that photograph of Ella that you have?"

"Yes," he said in some surprise.

"Is it the only one you have?"

"Yes."

"Will you do something for me?"

"Yes."

"Will you burn it—now, without letting me see it again?"

He was silent for a minute. He was sensitive and understanding. He thought that she disliked having any trace of his first wife in the house. He understood the feeling and sympathised with it. He wished she had mentioned it before. He wished he had guessed and forestalled it.

"Of course, my dear," he said quietly. "I'll do it now."

He went from the room, leaving her still standing at the window looking out at the sweet briar hedge—the sweet briar hedge that typified to her the peace and love and happiness and security of her home—the peace and love and happiness and security that had been built up day by day throughout these ten years. Ten years' peace and happiness to be shattered for ever by a word. She had only to say it—as, till she actually entered the house, she had meant to say it.

"John, Ella's alive. I saw her this afternoon. She wasn't drowned, after all."

And the peace and happiness would be gone for ever.

She was essentially an honest woman. That moment of self-delusion in her bedroom was over. She knew—as she had known even then—finally and beyond a shadow of doubt that the woman she had spoken to that afternoon was John's wife. She knew that if she didn't tell John she'd be committing a sin, that she'd be living a lie for every day for the rest of her life. With this knowledge in her heart life would never again be for her quite happy, quite unclouded. But the sin would be hers, and the unhappiness would be hers. They wouldn't touch John, they wouldn't touch the children. She made her final irrevocable decision. She'd keep them to herself—both the knowledge and its shadow—for ever. God and no one else should judge between her and the woman she had seen that afternoon.

She heard him come into the room.

"I've done it," he said.

"It was just a whim," she said casually, "you understand, don't you, John?"

"Of course I do, my dear," he said tenderly. He came across to her and stood by her at the window.

"Did you go up to town this afternoon?" he said.

"Yes."

"See anyone you knew?"

She had a sudden vision of a ravaged face, with loose lips and bloodshot eyes. It would always be before her eyes now. She seemed to hear a bitter mirthless laugh. It would always be in her ears now. She kept her eyes fixed on the sweet briar hedge and answered steadily:

"No. I just ran up and back again as quickly as I could. I wanted to be home before you."

BILLY-THE-BOY

By PHILIP RANSOM

ILLUSTRATED BY W. M. TREYER

THE outline of this affair the police court missionary (we used to play cricket together) came down to Wiltshire purposely to tell me.

The interesting part, however, was what I gathered, with infinite pains, from Billy-the-Boy himself and a certain tradesman. The responsibility for putting it together as a consistent yarn is mine, of course.

Though the court missionary, who is both wise and persuasive, pleaded with me on Billy-the-Boy's behalf, most people still think me a confiding fool. Judge for yourself.

I.

FURTIVELY Billy-the-Boy, whose nickname was no term of endearment, turned the corner of the mean street which housed him. In one glance his widely innocent blue eyes embraced the whole familiar vista—the squabbling dirty children, obstructing the pavement which was their only playground; the uncouth cloth-capped women who from their doorsteps exchanged gross pleasantries or more gross obloquy; the littered garbage of the gutter—all the environment, in fact, in which he lived, and through which lounged, swaggered or stumbled according to the state of their exchequer the two men on whom he depended, whom, too, more than hunger, more than death, more even than the police, he feared.

The lad's quick eye sought the doorway which admitted to the staircase leading to the room tenanted by his two patrons—the room in which Billy-the-Boy himself was free to come and go, to eat and sleep, by virtue of his extreme usefulness. On this depended, as he had every reason to know, his daily bread, such as it was; more than that—his very existence. In the doorway, short-necked, thick-set, the embodiment of brutal energy, lounged Big Bill Nuggett, waiting for someone. Observing this attitude, Billy-the-Boy shuddered and slowly resumed his way towards what he knew as "'ome," and towards the thrashing which most certainly awaited him. For he had failed in his mission.

Of his two patrons Billy-the-Boy knew practically nothing except in a professional way, wherein he knew far too much. He did know, however, that, though neither of them was his father, both of them expected and exacted a more than filial obedience, "and no questions asked." He owed this adoption to his small size, for he was stunted as only a London gutter-waif can be; his expression of refined and almost ethereal innocence, due doubtless to the pinch of hunger in early childhood; and, above all, to the dexterity of his carefully trained fingers. He was, in fact, a gilt-edged investment (standing ridiculously below par) to the two men. Other companions he had none—he knew far too much to be permitted to form outside attachments. This Billy-the-Boy accepted with the unquestioning stoicism with which he accepted life as a whole, realising blindly that, as a *quid pro quo*, his own liberty within its circumscribed sphere was little likely ever to be jeopardised. For on those occasions (infrequent in the case of these experts at the game) when "trouble" arose, which word connotes the dark-blue shadow of the Law, hardly any secret was more sedulously guarded than the one which preserved Billy-the-Boy on the active list. Like all well-regulated investments, he had the virtue of continuing to pay dividends in the absence, enforced or otherwise, of his possessors.

No sooner had Big Bill's piggy little eye caught sight of that slight figure in the crowd than his great bulk vanished like a shadow from the doorway. He had gone, as the boy surmised, to rouse Mike Flanagan from beery slumber. Billy shuddered again, and paused to answer the ribald greeting of an urchin in cut-down corduroys and a sweater. Not that he wished him well, not that he

had any inclination towards friendship—a word unknown to him—but merely to postpone arrival. It is one thing to go as a lamb to the slaughter in the proverbial ignorance of such innocents—it is quite another to be of equally tender age, with an equally tender skin, but with the knowledge of precocious experience nagging at your courage.

Miserably Billy-the-Boy broke off his conversation, secretly conscious of having made things worse by loitering, and warily he climbed the draughty stairs. There was a poor fire burning in the tiny grate before which loomed the dark bulk of Mr. Nuggett. As Billy entered the man stretched out his hand without a word. The boy shook his head.

"Ain't got nuffin for yer ter-dye," he muttered, and glanced apprehensively behind him. It was as he feared. Stretched on a low bed in the corner, Mike Flanagan blasphemed quietly to himself. He sat up suddenly. "A useless bit of rubbish, you are for sure," he began venomously, and one glance at his face was enough to send Billy-the-Boy cringing into the darkest shadows of the room.

It was Billy-the-Boy's business, inconspicuously dressed, to resemble a respectable errand-boy in clothes on which his protectors had spent much thought and no inconsiderable sum, to wriggle his eel-like way into the thick of every crowd, and to extract therefrom any trinkets, watches, petty-cash or other unconsidered trifles which were insecurely attached to the persons of their rightful owners. Sometimes, for a special purpose, it was a latch-key that was sought and secured by the supple little hand. Such were always returned (after incredibly brief contact with a soft piece of soap) by the same dexterous fingers before the crowd dispersed. Big Bill and Mike did the rest, usually leaving the boy asleep wrapped in his dirty blankets, but when he was taken with them he had another part to play. It was amazing through what small apertures that skinny little body could worm its way, and how soundlessly, and with what certainty, it could move in a darkened house. For reconnaissance he was invaluable, and as a medium of admission from within for the two bulky men he was unique—the thin edge of their burglarious wedge. Himself, he worked the West End as a rule, the crowds there being dense and pleasantly garnished with the trophies for which he hunted, and rarely returned empty-handed. But when his luck was out . . .

To-night it was Mike Flanagan who swung the buckled belt, while Big Bill's great hand stifled the boy's cries.

II.

It was on the morning after this painful episode that the Destiny which deals the cards re-shuffled the pack.

Sore in body, and very sore in mind, Billy-the-Boy was for the first time consciously rebellious within. Inarticulate thoughts of escape from his bondage seethed behind those wide blue eyes of his. He had, as a fact, unknowingly arrived at one of those crises which suddenly devastate most of us when small cumulative causes provoke a train of thought loaded with upheaval. Never before aware of his emotions, now he was dismally cognisant of some feeling which was neither hunger, thirst nor cold—old familiars, the cure for whose misery was obvious if not always accessible. But this was different. He did not know where to look for an avenue of escape from this incomprehensible *malaise* which afflicted him. Nor was this strange, seeing that what he was suffering was the loneliness of an individual hitherto unthinking and almost animal in mechanical obedience to familiar stimuli, but now, for the first time, self-conscious and aware. How could he know that this cold isolation of the mind is the price we humans commonly pay for individual self-consciousness, or realise that its icy touch is what turns a child into a man?

Billy-the-Boy looked round him with fresh eyes that drab morning at the well-known street in which he stood. It was one of those streets in the West End which, connecting larger arteries of traffic, are themselves quietly residential. The hour was ten o'clock, and the yellow light of day could barely assert itself. Errand-boys, such as he aped to be, passed briskly up and down, whistling and exchanging rude jollities. Billy-the-Boy, leaning empty-handed against a lamp-post, glared sourly at them. Along the road towards him crawled a tradesman's cart from house to house, one wheel scraping the kerb. The pony drawing it appeared to know the round as well as its red-faced master, for it stopped and started of its own accord as he popped cheerily up and down area steps and in and out of doors. Every now and then, its master delayed below stairs, the

pony would fidget, pricking its ears towards the railings behind which the man had vanished, and tossing its clever little head as he reappeared, and thrusting out its nose for a reward—a pat, a word, or sometimes a lump of sugar.

Billy-the-Boy watched it with increasing interest. "Reg'lar pals, them two!" he thought, and wondered exceedingly, for here was something strange and new to him. Incredible as it may seem, he had never thought about a horse in his life. He knew, of course, that there were such beasts, as one knows that there is a thing called the Brindled Gnu—he had seen them in the streets just about as comprehendingly as one may see it at the Zoo; but that was all. They stood to him for a clattering and clumsy form of locomotion which was easier to dodge in a crowded thoroughfare than a taxi, but not so easy as a bicycle. He knew also that they "ran," and that shillings could be mysteriously converted by their agency into half-crowns, or, more usually, into blasphemously-rent pieces of worthless paper. But as living entities he had never discovered them before—they simply did not come into his underworld at all.

The pony was gradually drawing nearer, and Billy-the-Boy eyed it curiously. Everything appeared rather queer and new to him to-day, even the most ordinary things seeming to have fresh facets—something to do with this sudden sickness of his mind. But nothing looked half as strange and new as this pony.

Billy-the-Boy, his slight form half hidden by the lamp-post, stayed very still and surveyed its head, now almost within touch. As it breathed, he noticed its nostrils, which had queer curls in them, dilated, and the breath hung in the chill air like smoke. The side of its nose and lips had long hairs growing out stiffly, beaded with dewy pearls, and as it tossed its head he caught its eye. This was brown, and full and pleasant. An attractive eye to Billy-the-Boy. "Gosh! Ain't it wet-looking!" he thought, and peered more closely. The pony's warm breath smote his cheek richly. It smelt nice, and a little thrill started somewhere at the base of the boy's spine and lost itself in the region of his heart. The pony nosed towards him tentatively. Billy glanced round. The man was evidently in pleasant company, for his laugh could be heard mingling with a woman's voice at the bottom of an area steps. Cautiously Billy-the-Boy stretched out his hand towards the pony's head. A soft brown nose was instantly thrust into his palm, and the nostrils snuffled for food. Teeth champed ever so slightly on the bit, and Billy swiftly withdrew his hand. Too swiftly, for up went the startled head, and back went its ears.

"Nah then!" exclaimed Billy-the-Boy, raising his elbow in self-defence with instinctive recognition of the gesture. "Chuck it!" He retreated a pace. Truth to tell, he was frightened of this new discovery of his.

Stepping away from its head, he examined the rest of it. Black, it was, he decided—or very nearly black. "A black 'orse," he said to himself. "Same as that public down our corner!" The man came whistling up the steps, and Billy-the-Boy watched the easy familiar way in which he gave the pony a slap on the neck and a cheery word. It moved on briskly, and stopped of its own accord six houses down the street.

"Blest if it don't savvy wot 'e says!" pondered Billy-the-Boy with new amazement. He sauntered on to where it stood, and continued his examination. It had, he saw, bright little shoes attached to its feet. "'Orse-shoes! 'Ow do they stick on?" he wondered. "Must be a 'ell of a job fixing of 'em!" He stooped to look, and his cap brushed the pony's side. It stamped suddenly, almost on his toe. He jumped back, regarding it with suspicion, fear again uppermost, but it turned its head and that soft eye fascinated him. He knew a great desire to touch its skin again. Very gently his hand stole out—that sensitive subtle hand—and rubbed the soft part between the nostrils. The pony stood. Billy-the-Boy was delighted; he had never felt anything so soft and satisfactory to his touch—warm, too, and very much alive. His hand stole upwards, fingers gently working, till they reached the hollow over the eye, where something checked them, some instinct that this was an acceptable overture. The pony rubbed against his hand.

"'E likes it!" thought Billy triumphantly, and went on scratching, so hypnotised with delight that he did not hear the man's approach. The pony flung up its little head with a jingle of bit and buckle, and a hand descended on the nape of Billy's neck.

"'Op it!" exclaimed a rough but kindly voice, and the strong hand shook him gently from side to side. "'Op it! I knows you boys—teasing my pony. I won't 'ave it—see?"

Billy-the-Boy wriggled round in his captor's grasp, and gazed up appealingly.

"I ain't teasin' of 'im!" he protested, in the voice with which he was wont to wring threepenny-bits from matrons—"Sw'elp me I ain't! I'm . . . I'm . . ." He stopped.

"Well then, what is it?" asked the man, looked up. The possibility of this had not occurred to him—he was far too timid of the pony himself for such a thought to have entered his head.

"No bloomin' fears!" he exclaimed heartily.



"'Op it!' exclaimed a rough but kindly voice, and the strong hand shook him gently from side to side. 'Op it! I knows you boys—teasing my pony. I won't 'ave it—see?'"

puzzled but relinquishing his grip. But Billy-the-Boy was puzzled too.

"I dunno, 'ardly, Mister!" he replied at last. "Mikin' fren's wiv 'im—that's wot I was doin', I serpose!"

"Ho!" answered the man doubtfully. "Making friends, was you? Don't you go fer to frighten 'im, then!" Billy-the-Boy

The man laughed. The pony meanwhile had been nudging and jostling its master with its head, snuffing at his pockets, nuzzling at his hand.

"Wot's 'e do that for?" asked Billy-the-Boy.

"Food—the little rascal—always pokin' out for something to eat, 'e is. Nah then, greedy!"

Billy's mind worked quickly. Here was a chance for an overture of friendship with a vengeance, but . . . He sighed.

Safe at the bottom of his pocket lay his lunch—all he himself would have to eat, that is to say, till he got back to Bill and Mike, and then a bit of supper depended largely on the nature of his spoils, so far non-existent.

He sighed again. Slowly he drew it out. "Can I give 'im this, Mister?" he pleaded, proffering his precious bit of cold polony. "I'd rather 'e should 'ave it—strite, I would!"

Billy-the-Boy, returning empty-handed, but for some reason whistling cheerfully, got another taste of Mike's belt-buckle before he went to bed.

He crawled into his blanket with that blank feeling of loneliness aching more even than his back. As he put up his hand to brush the hair out of his eyes a faint odour assailed his nose. It was unfamiliar, and he had to sniff again before he could identify it. "The little black 'orse," he thought. "Smelt good, 'e did!" He turned over with his hand against his cheek. Sleep did not come, but a thought stirred in the welter of his mind. What had he said—oh yes! "Mikin' fren's wiv 'im—that's wot I was doin'." He seized this thought, and played with it. Then he turned again. "Well, serpose I was—wiv the little black 'orse—no 'arm in that!"

Odd, all the same! Sleep claimed him.

III.

THE acquisition of a few lumps of sugar was Billy-the-Boy's first care when he awoke. It tickled him tremendously that horses would eat sugar—but if sugar, why not polony? How was he to know that? The man's good-natured merriment still rankled a little, and his ears burned when he thought of it. . . .

Sugar obtained, feloniously, of course, Billy hurried on his way, neglecting several simple opportunities of enrichment in his eagerness to see "the little black 'orse" again.

At last he spied the back of the cart standing by the kerb, just as he expected, and the man's hat disappearing down some area steps. Quietly Billy-the-Boy crept up. "Mustn't frighten 'im," he thought, but the pricked ears were sharp, and the pony turned its head. As he did so, a low wickering sound greeted the boy, who stood amazed.

"'E knows 'oo I am, I do berlieve!" he thought. "Well I be blowed!" The pony wickered again, and thrust its soft muzzle up against his side.

"'E knows me fer certain!" exulted Billy-the-Boy; and then he choked. Some totally new emotion had him by the throat, and seemed to strangle him. He sniffed uncertainly, and stood a second, suffering for the first time in his little life that joy-begot pain which is sole talisman against the loneliness of mortals. He would have liked to fling his arms about the pony's neck, and sob into its mane—but pride forbade. A voice made him jump.

"'Ullo, kid! You again, is it?" Billy turned sharply, passing the back of his hand across his eyes.

"Yus—it's me orl right," he answered gruffly.

The man peered into his face. "Ho! And what's up with you, then?"

"Up? Nuffin, o' course!" retorted Billy, fiercely sniffing. "Got some sugar fer 'im ter-dye—look 'ere." He plunged his hand into his pocket and brought out the precious lumps. The man nodded and smiled. Billy could almost see the word "polony" shaping on his lips. He glared furiously, and the man burst out laughing.

"All right, sonny; give 'em to him—he's a greedy little devil."

"Are 'is teef sharp, Mister?" inquired Billy-the-Boy, holding out a lump between finger and thumb most gingerly.

"You'll know in a minute!" laughed the man. "'Ere—like this, look!" He laid a lump flat on the palm of Billy's hand, and the pony sucked it in. The boy stood listening to the satisfactory munching noise that followed, one eye anxiously on the man's face—gauging him. He longed to ask a thousand questions, but was afraid of being a nuisance and sent about his business. The man was watching him, too; Billy's naïve ignorance and enthusiasm appealed to him, and he loved horses.

"Taffy—that's his name," he volunteered. "He's a Welshman; comes from Wales, you know."

"Ah!" replied the boy, nodding his head wisely. "I knows. Cardiff City, and the likes of that . . ."

"Um! Born and bred on the Welsh mountains—that's where these ponies come from. Cardiff City!"

"Pony!" exclaimed Billy scathingly. "'E's a little black 'orse—that's wot 'e is!" Pony indeed—thought Billy—no fear!

The man laughed again, and ran his eye over Taffy's sturdy little frame. Suddenly he perceived that the boy was right—that Taffy was, in build, a horse in miniature.

"Very well, son," he said good-humouredly, "have it your own way—dessay you're right!" He vanished, and Billy-the-Boy held out another lump of sugar on his palm as to the manner born. But Taffy was too eager, and knocked his hand so that the sugar rolled two paces down the gutter. As Billy stooped to pick it up Taffy playfully seized him by the seat of his trousers. A passer-by stopped to laugh.

"'Ere!" shouted the boy, starting up. "'Ere! Ply the gime, can't yer!" he continued wrathfully. "Rotten little tyke!" He raised his hand, but something checked him. He peered with amazement into the pony's face. A broad grin burst upon his cheeks as he stood for a second softly rubbing his outraged anatomy.

"Sw'elp me Gawd!" he suddenly guffawed. "'E's laughing at me—strite, 'e is! Look at 'im, Mister—the saucy little 'orse!" A deep affection dawned warmly on his loneliness, irradiating it with visions of unimagined possibilities. He stood there, laughing indeed, but choking back something most certainly not laughter.

"The saucy little 'orse!" he repeated softly in a strangled sort of voice, and held out the hand of friendship. Taffy caressed it with his nose, and at that instant Destiny, also laughing perhaps, dealt Billy-the-Boy a very courtly card.

IV.

Billy-the-Boy stepped from that encounter into a new world. All the pent-up feelings of his boyish heart, deprived hitherto of all that makes boyhood wonderful, and oppressed by all that can make it wellnigh intolerable, burst forth in a flood of emotion that had Taffy for its safety-valve. Rejoicing in this new freedom, he found comfort. Had he not a pal at last—closest recipient of secrets, of hopes, of fears, above all of affection? No longer were Big Bill and Mike the beginning and end of his whole existence—the door of escape ever stood open for his starved spirit. So far the idea of physical escape still only brushed the threshold of his mind. Force of habit, ingrained by blows from earliest memory, held him blindly to the larcenous routine of his life—but half its terrors were dead. Billy-the-Boy had discovered the refuge of imagination, and the solace of solicitude for the welfare of another living thing.

"Don't never beat 'im, I serpose?" he one day asked the astonished man. Billy's heart thumped in his throat as he put the anxious question which had haunted him for several nights. In truth, he could scarcely bring himself to put it. Familiar as he was in person with physical violence, the idea of it as applied to Taffy horrified him. The man gazed at him for a moment.

"Look here, son," he said slowly, "if I was to catch anyone ill-treating this 'ere pony, I'd—I'd stretch 'is neck for 'im—I would that, if I swung for it myself!"

Billy-the-Boy took a deep breath, and happily watched a slice of carrot disappear between Taffy's prehensile lips. He spat on the pavement for emphasis, and said his last word on the subject.

"And serve 'im —— well right, it would," he said, and passed whistling on his unlawful occasions.

Strangely enough, it had taken Billy-the-Boy some weeks, so wrapped up was he in Taffy, to realise that there were other horses on the London streets. He made this discovery in a narrow lane in the City where a pair of great dray-horses stood patiently. He could barely reach their huge hairy noses, but, to his delight, his overtures were recognised after the first touch. And so, he discovered, it always was with him. By some fluke of atavism (no fluke, probably, did we know his parentage) he had been born with that mysterious gift—"hands on a horse." Henceforth he walked among friends; but Taffy reigned supreme in his eager heart.

It was a black day, which ended in tragedy, when he saw the stark bonnet of a motor delivery-van standing in Taffy's place. Billy-the-Boy stood rooted to the ground, wave after wave of misery breaking over him. His hope that the red-faced man might be in charge of the van and would know Taffy's whereabouts was short-lived.

"'Orses!" exclaimed the black-visaged fellow who emerged from the familiar area gate—"'orses—I don't know nothing about 'orses. We're changing over, that's what—you cut along now, ain't got no time to waste on the likes of you!"

He did something with his foot, and the hideous mechanism burst into spurious life and stank its way down the street.

Billy-the-Boy, lip between teeth, wheeled on his heel and walked away, head down,

eyes blinded. Thus he walked all day, and in the evening met disaster.

V.

It is uncanny how Chance always throws temptation in the path of those least able to resist, and small wonder that a whole philosophy of Good and Evil has been founded on that fact. It was in the Tube lift that very afternoon at Leicester Square that a slight woman with clear eyes and a resolute mouth opened her vanity-bag to fumble for a ticket. Something tinkled to the ground as the lift stopped with a clash of opening gates. Billy-the-Boy stooped like a hawk, and flickered like a woodcock through the crowd.

Alone in his room he took off his coat and knelt to examine his prize, which he had been speculatively turning over and over in his pocket all the way home. It was a small round enamelled box containing a diminutive powder-puff. Billy, through whose slim fingers many such had passed, appraised its intrinsic value accurately enough in the dim light of the fire. Then he turned it over to look more closely, and gave a great gasp of surprise. On the lid, exquisitely wrought in enamel, was a horse's head, extended, nostrils dilated, ears pricked, galloping. "Gawd!" sobbed Billy-the-Boy as a footstep sounded unsteadily on the stair outside. "Oh, Gawd!" he sobbed, and thrust the box into his trouser pocket, flinging himself on his blanket in feigned sleep. He lay there like a stone, for he knew that he was about to commit the unforgivable sin. For the horse's head was black, and his muzzle, even as Taffy's muzzle, was warmly brown. . . . Honour among thieves is no empty motto, as many a grown man has found to his cost.

The door burst open, and Mike swayed in the threshold. Billy-the-Boy observed him furtively through slit lids. He was drunk—not incapably, only fiendishly. Billy-the-Boy lay still, hoping against hope that the man would fling himself on the bed and pass into that stage of stupid oblivion which from experience he knew was shortly due. But the room was cold, and Mike passed unsteadily across the uneven floor to the fireplace, where a low red fire was glowing. Noisily and uncertainly he emptied coal on to it, smothering the embers. He kicked the smoking mass together, cursing, and thrust the short poker into the base of it to make a draught. A ribbon of flame shot up, and filled the room with palsied shadows. The man rose from his knees, stretched himself heavily, yawned and hiccoughed. Then he saw Billy-the-Boy and lurched across, swaying over him ominously.

"Shamming asleep, is it?" he exclaimed, stirring the heap of blankets vigorously with his toe—"the little varmint!"

Concealment useless, Billy sat up, rubbing his eyes with dirty knuckles. "Oh! 'Ullo, Mike! You back?" he said, and feigned a yawn. "You tired—I was asleep." But it was no good.

"Shell out!" commanded the man tersely, holding out his hand.

Billy fumbled. He had at least a sop for Cerberus.

Mike regarded the fistful of small coins which rattled from Billy's palm to his own with sour disfavour.

"Och—the lazy little skulking divil it is!" he roared, "and yourself with no more than this to give me, and me with the thirst on me and the drouth of me tongue would puzzle the Saints thimselves. . . ." He aimed a kick at the boy, but Billy leapt from his blankets and dodged into a far corner, waiting his chance to dart past his tormentor into the perilous security of the streets. It was not to be. Mike fumbled in some vast tail-coat pocket and brought forth a black bottle, which he raised to his lips, draining its dregs. In one movement he tore it from his mouth and flung it at Billy-the-Boy, who, ducking as it splintered on the wall, slipped, slithered, found his feet and dived for the doorway under the outstretched arm. Mike's fingers groped, and found him, closing on his shirt. The cheap shoddy parted with a scream, and Billy, bare to the waist, found himself in the clutches of the man; found himself being shaken—shaken—shaken like a rat, till the room swirled round him, and the breath refused to fill his lungs. Worse than that—for even then his hammering ears caught the metallic sound of something that flew from him and rolled across the floor. Mike flung him on the bed, and pounced. He danced with rage.

"Och—the schaming little sweep, the dirty little thief," Mike gibbered, mad with drink and rage. "'Tis Mike Flanagan now will tache ye to be stealin' from us—begob! but I'll larn ye a lesson'll last ye to the gates of Hell thimselves, sure an' I will if the Divil himself with his pinchers prevints me—and him no blacker than yourself. . . ." He paused for breath, and glanced round the room for some weapon to satisfy his rage.

In that dark corner the boy's white skin gleamed faintly like ivory at dusk as his back rose and fell with sobbing breath. It roused some devil in the man. The black handle of the poker protruding starkly from the fire arrested his eye. He tore it forth, and saw that the other end glowed sulky red. . . .

Mike Flanagan laughed.

VI.

BILLY-THE-BOY never forgot that pain—that exquisite scarlet pain that tingled from his naked back through every fibre and cell of his body, and pierced his brain with a million daggers. It seemed to tear something in his head to pieces—something that mattered very much, and then did not matter at all if only that pain would stop.

His first scream brought Big Bill, lounging as usual in the entrance, to the foot of the stairs—his second, muffled by a great hand though it was, brought him up and into the room like a tornado. Billy-the-Boy was conscious of a struggle, oaths, and a crash —but all he cared about was that the pain had stopped. The poker clattered back into the grate.

"Git up!" commanded a rough voice; and the boy saw Big Bill standing over him. But he was cowed—completely—as an animal can be cowed and beaten by fire. He whimpered and crawled away. Weeks afterwards, when his back had healed, he was still cowed. There was no spirit left in him, and there was no Taffy to be a refuge in the desolate world in which he cringed alone. Subservient before to every whim of the men who kept him, he was now quite servile—all thought of independent action gone, all the new-silvered mirror of his imagination dulled. He was their tool —nothing more—as much their tool, and almost as incapable of initiative, as any jemmy in their kit.

"You've broke 'is spirit, Mike," said Big Bill one day, watching him. "You're a fool to 'ave done it, mate; 'e ain't 'arf so useful as 'e was—not 'arf, you fool!"

Still, they used him for all that, and not long after Billy-the-Boy perceived by certain well-known signs that a big night-job was pending. In what part of London it was to be he did not know—he never did know where he was on these occasions. He was simply taken in the dark, like a ferret in a bag, and, his job explained to him, was put into a house much as a ferret has its nose blindly thrust into a hole.

This time, when it came, his instructions were thorough, and he judged that the job was one that mattered. Unemotionally he listened while it was explained to him that entrance was desired by the two men into an old building used as a store for furniture, boxes and the like. What they were after he did not know, nor care; what mattered alone to him was the plan of campaign. The big doors of this store opened on to a quiet street, but not so quiet that a man could pick a lock there with impunity. Besides, the door was bolted on the inside. At the back, however, the building standing on a sharp slope, there was a vault beneath with a trap-door, and a ladder or some other means of gaining access to the room above. This would admit Billy, and he could cope at leisure from within with the fastenings of the front door. He nodded acutely. His pliant fingers on a false key could sense the wards of any reasonable lock.

"Savvy?" asked Big Bill sharply. "When yer've fixed the door so's it'll open, wait till you 'ear us go by. I'll whistle 'Ome, Sweet 'Ome,' and if it's all O.K. you tap on the door as Mike and me pass, an' we'll slip inside. Twig?"

Billy did twig. Very simple, it all was—provided he could get in through the back. But the men were certain of that.

"Ter-night?" he asked.

"'Tis ter-night we'll do it," answered Mike. "For there's rain comin' up the river from the say—sure an' can't I smell it—an' 'twill be dark as the grave itself be half-past one of the mornin'." And so it was.

VII.

BILLY-THE-BOY groped his unerring way down the dark passage towards the darker blot which betrayed the arch of the vault from which he was to gain access to the store above. It was raining pitilessly, and his thin coat was wet, and his hands were cold as stones. He shivered miserably as he went mechanically on his way, his pockets heavy with the instruments which in his magic fingers should coax the lock of the main door. He was almost invisible, and he made no sound as he slipped along by the streaming wall. He was not excited, he felt no thrill of any kind—this was his job —but every sense was alert.

At the black entrance he stopped. That is a feeble word. Stopped! He was jerked into rigid immobility, for something moved in the inky recesses of the vault. Tensely

he plumbed the darkness before him with every nerve keyed to the highest pitch of perception. Two senses together let a flood of light into his mind. His nose said "Horses!" and his ears, picking out that comfortable munching sound, confirmed his nose. He drew a sigh of relief, knowing that no horse, once he had spoken to it and touched it, would worry about his unexpected presence. How many horses, though? He listened again. One only, he decided presently, and that at the very far end of the vault. It dawned on him that this was a disused Mews, and that the store-room overhead—his objective—had served as a loft in bygone days when Mews were full of their legitimate inhabitants. Now he knew what to expect. Had he not searched for Taffy in every known Mews in London?



"Billy saw his gigantic shadow swim up and engulf everything."

He moved confidently forward into the darkness, disturbing nothing, stumbling over nothing, guided by that sixth sense which led him by night. The horse had heard him, and had ceased to feed. He was close to him now, and an impatient stamp warned the boy that he must make his introduction quickly before the animal panicked. Softly he spoke to it, and softly crept alongside the dark loom of its warm body in the stall. His hand ran up its neck, and, as usual, the neck bent confidingly to his touch. Suddenly a low wickering of delight turned Billy's heart to fire. "Taffy!" he whispered ecstatically. "Strike me—but it's ole Taffy again! Oh, Gawd, you little black 'orse—I'd know you anywhere when you mike that lovely noise!"

He slid his arm over the rough neck, and laid his cheek against the rank down-hanging mane. "I got no sugar fer you, boy," he whispered. "But *you* don't care! Yer glad

ter 'ave me back, Taffy—I knows yer are ! "

The pony nuzzled his side softly, plucking at his coat with little playful tugs. A glow of happiness swept over Billy now. Gone were the shadows of loneliness and misery, gone the despair of the last few weeks. Nothing remained of heart-ache but the one memory of that searing pain across his back. For that was burnt too deeply to pass.

Suddenly he remembered his mission—a routine business to be despatched as expeditiously as possible. He drew a small electric torch from his pocket, and, steadying the pony with his voice and hand, flashed the little circle of light behind him on the ground. He knew enough not to alarm Taffy with a sudden light—besides, did he not remember striking a match



too close to the pony's nose one day in the street, and what the red-faced man had said to him of the panic of horses in the presence of fire ?

Taffy started when the light flashed out, but nothing more. Cautiously Billy played the feeble beam about him, then upwards. He saw the rack of hay, and, above that, what he sought—the shoot from the loft over his head. He patted the pony, and went into the next stall. A jump, a heave, a quick wriggle of skinny limbs, and Billy-the-Boy stood breathless in the store. He waited to hear the quiet munching start below him, and switched on his beam to look around.

The great loft was full of tables, chairs, all sorts of furniture, as well as wooden packing-cases of every shape and size. Some of these were nailed down, and heavy ; some opened, and full of straw and paper. Great heaps of shavings and packing were piled against the walls. Billy-the-Boy peered round at each of the four walls in turn, and located the door which led into the street. There seemed to be no other door, so he threaded his way to it, and worked swiftly on it with his tools. The lock yielded its secret to his deft fingers with a click. He gave a little grunt of satisfaction—squirted oil into the rusty bolts, and waited for the signal from outside. It came. Billy gave two

quick raps on the wood, and slid the door open. Bill and Mike Flanagan stood by his side like shadows. Billy-the-Boy automatically shot the bolts and locked the door for safety, and they set to work.

The two men had pretty well assured themselves that they would be free from interruption, and they worked heartily. Billy-the-Boy sat watching them. To him this was as prosaic a business as doing sums would be to the average boy of his age—part of his life, part of the day's work, that was all. His mind was with Taffy in the stable below. He let his imagination roam pleasantly. . . .

Nevertheless, it was he who gave the alarm—too late. The blinding light which flashed upon them from behind caught them red-handed, and froze them to a group of statues. Mike Flanagan regained mobility first. With an oath he flung up the heavy iron bar which was in his hand, and charged the light. Billy saw his gigantic shadow swim up and engulf everything. The light crashed out. Something fell heavily, and some broken glass tinkled like a silver bell. . . .

Silence, then, and darkness, and the heavy breathing of men listening in the darkness. And down below, Taffy, stamping in alarm.

Big Bill's whisper broke the spell. "'Oo was it, Mike?"

"Dunno. 'Ush, 'e's still 'ere!" Silence like a black pall descended again, and Billy-the-Boy strained to listen. He could hear two men breathing—only two. Queer—that—he thought. Something moved; a quiet rustling sound as if a man was fumbling over something he could not see.

"Bill!"

"Yus! What is it?"

"'E's a stiff 'un, Bill! Holy Saints, I done 'im in!" The strained crescendo of that whisper chilled the boy's blood. No wonder he could not hear him breathe—he thought stupidly. Big Bill answered nothing for an age. "Let's look," he said at last, and his voice faltered.

Grotesque shadows leapt into being as the white light of the torch flashed guardedly. The man, whoever he was, lay spread-eagled on his back. His face was looking at Billy-the-Boy. It puzzled him. One side of it seemed all right, the other—— He saw now, and looked sickly away. Mike was a powerful man.

"'E's dead orl right," breathed Big Bill from where he knelt. His wet cheek gleamed lividly as the light touched it. Mike went to him and the two men whispered together for a long time in the dark, while the boy sat motionless. He wondered vaguely what would happen next—it never occurred to him to wonder what to do himself. Bill and Mike would settle that for him, but he was suddenly conscious of wishing that he was out of this place, out in the open air—out in the street giving Taffy lumps of sugar perhaps, or clean bright slices of cool carrot. . . .

The men were moving about now, shading the light. Billy-the-Boy saw, dully, what they were doing—piling straw and paper, shavings and bits of box-lids—anything they could lay hands on—over the body. It looked like a futile attempt to hide what they had done. "Sure to be found!" thought the boy, and wondered. Presently they had finished and stood, wiping their hands.

"Got a match?" asked Mike.

Big Bill nodded, and rattled a box.

"A few—but enough, I 'ope."

Mike turned to Billy-the-Boy and handed him the box.

"We're off," he said. "'Tis ten minutes will be all we want. Then put the fire to this—and scoot the way ye came. Savvy?"

Billy-the-Boy started to his feet. He glanced about him. The whole place was wood—wooden rafters, wooden boxes, wooden walls. . . .

Big Bill saw him hesitate, and guessed wrong.

"*'E* won't 'urt you when we've gorn!" he said, and stirred the heap of litter with his foot. He laughed shakily.

Billy-the-Boy did not hear him. His train of thought continued. . . . Wooden walls, a blazing inferno in three minutes, wooden floor—and Taffy down below! Cold waves of horror engulfed him. The long habit of blind obedience fought its last fight—it tore him. He swallowed something dry and hard in his throat.

"I won't!" he breathed sullenly, and stepped back, out of reach.

Mike gave one gasp of astonishment—then his temper ripped again.

"You little spawn of Hell!" he gibbered. "But you will do it, begob, or I'll take the poker to ye agin! Maybe you'll remember that, my laddie! . . ." He gibbered on. Billy heard no more. The poker—that again! He knew he could not stand that pain again—he'd do it, oh yes! The poker!—Oh, he'd do it, yes, yes, yes. . . .

Below in his stall the pony wickered. Billy heard—something broke in him.

And then, unknowingly, he played the Ace which Destiny had dealt him—that very courtly card.

"Taffy!" he screamed. "Taffy!" For instinct drove him blindly to his only friend. He turned like a flash, ducked for the shoot, heard Mike thundering after him across the boards, felt a great hand brush his back, and he was down—down in a cloud of hay, down in the sweet air of Taffy's stall, his face in Taffy's mane. Escape! Escape!

The pony, really frightened now, reared back desperately. Something snapped. A foul threat came through the darkness of the narrow opening above. Reason returned to Billy in a flash. That narrow shoot—too narrow for the men. . . .

"Yah!" yelled Billy the gamin, free at last. "Yah! Yer can't do nuffin neither! I got the matches, and I got the keys wot work the door—I'm off! Yah! Serves yer right!"

Escape! He bolted through the vault and down the passage, out into the cool of the night and the rain. Behind him on the cobbles clattered the bright shoes of "the little black 'orse," wickering as he came—kicking at shadows.

Billy-the-Boy called to him, and ran on blindly—straight, this once, into the outstretched arms of the Law.



"Behind him on the cobbles clattered the bright shoes of 'the little black 'orse.' Billy-the-Boy called to him, and ran on blindly—straight, this once, into the outstretched arms of the Law."

"'Ere—wot's all this abaht?" exclaimed the Law.

Billy-the-Boy, with Taffy nuzzling at his elbow, lost no time in telling him. Breathless he ended, "I couldn't do it—strite I couldn't, Mister—could I now? 'Ow *could* I, Mister—not to a saucy little 'orse like that!"

He reeled, white against Taffy's black side. A whistle blew. . . .

"That boy's got good hands," said my

trainer, tapping his boot, as the long string of youngsters came winding over the Downs, and a fretful filly broke rank and passaged, pretty as a picture, casting a restless shadow over the short turf.

I watched in silence, till, humoured and happy, she sidled back into her place.

"Yes," I said reflectively, "he has. Wonderful hands!" I caught the eye of my first-born who ranged smiling beside me. He, knowing all things, leant to pat the black neck of his pony, and flung me a wink.

"Billy-the-Boy?" he commented. "He should have! Time for breakfast, Dad—and the 'little black 'orse' is getting cold. Come on!"

Confiding sentimentalist? Well, perhaps I am; but the court missionary (we used to play cricket together) is both persuasive *and* wise. It was he who, having told me this history, prevailed upon me to look at Billy-the-Boy's back.



THE BROKEN REED.

BROWN: I can't make out what Jackson does with his money. He was short on Tuesday, and he's short again to-day!

SMITH: Did he want to borrow from you?

BROWN: No, dash it! I wanted to borrow from him.



MEN ARE *SO* UNREASONABLE.

FAIR YOUNG THING: It's no use you people waiting. I've got a new frock on, and I am certainly not coming out until it has stopped raining.

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

A BATH.
By John Payne.

I FEEL that there must be a certain amount of delicacy in dealing with this subject. The only time that a bath should be, and usually is, spoken of in boastfulness of spirit is by the wonder who dares a cold bath in the depth of winter; who breaks the ice and puts his feet through the hole, sits on the jagged edge and swears he enjoys it.

I frankly confess that I have never broken the ice of my bath in the early morning, and as long as I live I never will. Indeed I do not take cold baths; I am therefore hopelessly ignorant of the etiquette people follow on these occasions.

Do they use soap? If so, what happens if the soap gets under the ice? Do they break another hole and fish it out, or watch it glimmering through the translucence, and go dirty?

As I say, I do not know. I have never liked cold baths, not even when as a simple little child a rude boy pushed me into a pond. (I remember then that my tears nearly warmed the icy water.) So I shall not deal with them in this article. I am referring to the intentional cold bath, not the bath which ought to be hot and isn't.

Be that as it may, to some people a bath is a great adventure, and to the majority it is an event in the daily life, and has a variety that no other preparation for "the daily round, the common task" can compete with.

First of all there is the walk to the bathroom. If we are lucky it can be contemplative. We know our destination. We know that the water will be the right temperature, that, indeed, everything will be ready and waiting for us. In taking this bath, not only are we performing a duty, but a blessed duty. A duty to ourselves and to our neighbour. Wherefore, our mind may be allowed to wander at its own sweet will. Not on the troubles of the day—they will come later as we meet the other members of the household. No, walking along with our towel in one hand, and our sponge in the other, there are soft quiet thoughts in our mind, happy thoughts of the things we would like to do, or would like to have done.

The pilgrimage to the bathroom is the time when our ideals are clear and seemingly acces-

sible. And this happy state of mind continues as we reach the goal and lock the door sedately, with the removal of the nightly garments, the appraisement of the temperature of the water with the right toe, and finally, the luxuriant sinking down into the mysterious and elusive depths. It is warm—it is comforting. It clings to the body,—it caresses it, and we allow ourselves to lie back and ponder on the "might have beens" for just a few minutes.

We wash and carry out the necessary ablutions as seemeth best in, what feels like, our godly wisdom. Slowly at first, almost lazily, we take our feet in our hands and cover them with scented lather; we even take time to admire our toes; truly, the only time we see them. No disturbing element distracts our mind. We come from the bath fresh, clean, beautified in mind and body.

Unfortunately, this state of mind is liable to pass under the drying process, for friction is calculated to kill all ideals. There is no gentle walk back to the room, it is an energetic shuffle, and from thence onwards the common thoughts of the day intrude, the principal one being breakfast.

That I consider is taking a bath when your luck is in, when you have plenty of time to spare, when there is no one else waiting for it, and the cook has got up early, cleaned the flues, and lit the kitchen fire.

But of course there are other times when your luck is clean out.

You get no simple walk to the bath, no contemplation of ideals. It is going to be a desperate struggle.

You have been listening at your door for your predecessor to finish. You have muttered oaths and curses on the length of time he has taken, and you are wishful of making a few unkind remarks such as: If it requires all that time to get clean, then the process ought to start in the scullery under the tap—cold tap for choice.

But at last noises indicate that the bathroom is about to be vacated, your chance is coming, and you are going to see that no one shall seize it from you.

Lo! the door opens, a quaint prehistoric-looking figure slowly emerges, and you make a dash. You feel that there are others in the vicinity, nasty people, who would if they could prevent you from reaching your goal, selfish persons who will not realise that it is your turn. And so you leap furiously forward. You dare not run or you would trip over your towel or something, and be trampled underfoot by those others. You reach the door, jump inside, slam it. You have won!

The person or persons on the other side of the door whom you have baffled are inclined to be acrimonious—nay, indeed they are. And you, your finer feelings dormant under a breathless exterior, are inclined to—and do indeed—gloat, until you find that you have forgotten the soap.

You look around to see what there is. You, obviously, dare not leave the room. The un-



THE OFFENSIVE DEFENSIVE.

ANGRY WIFE (after being hit by snowball): This is entirely your fault, Edmund. There was not the slightest necessity for you to bob down.



CAUSE SUFFICIENT.

SINGLE CLUBMAN: Wonder why Bagson is always holding his wife's hand?
MARRIED CLUBMAN (bitterly): To keep them out of his pockets!



THE SOCIAL SCALE IN HEADGEAR.

written law of not taking a man's seat in a railway carriage does not apply to a bath. Yes, in the soap-dish there is a very anæmic-looking piece. On examination, it has apparently suffered from a suppressed rash, and it has stuck to the soap-dish. Heaven knows when it was last used, and what for—very likely the dog. However, it has got to do, and you scrape half of it up with the nail-brush, hoping that in use it will not disappear down the waste pipe.

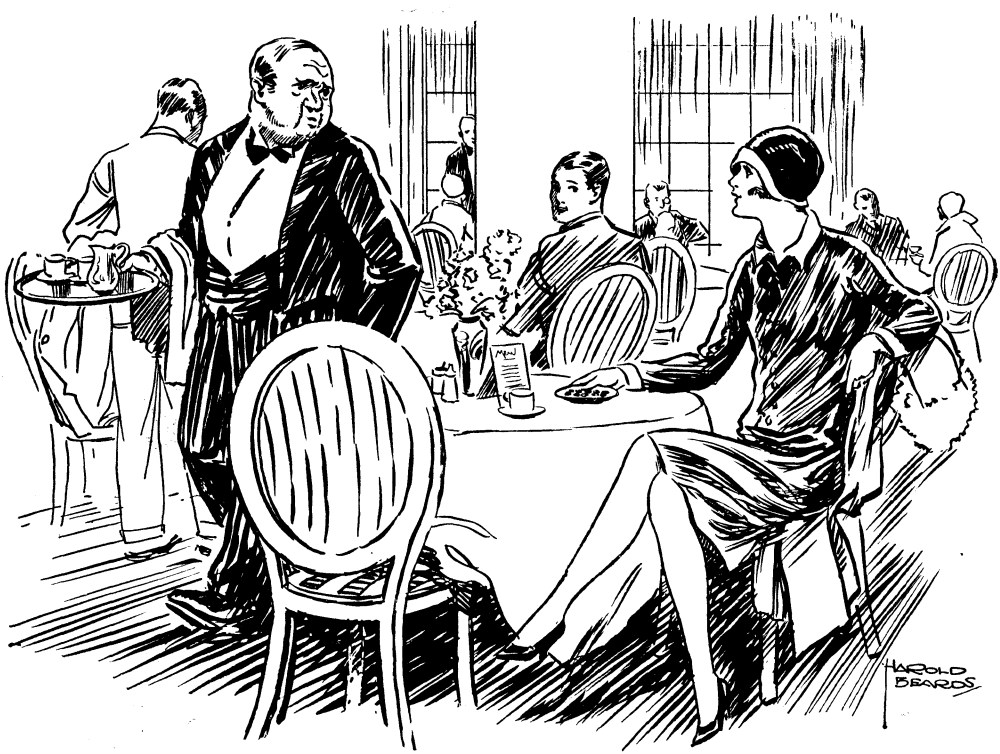
Then you turn to the hot-water tap, hopefully, and expectantly. Nothing happens. It is one of those screw affairs, and you give it another good twist. Still nothing happens. You feel that it has not been turned enough, so you persevere and you try turning it all ways at once. It begins to irritate you; you even pull it, but except for a slight gurgle that might be of human origin, there is no symptom of water, hot or otherwise. You look up to Heaven, you look at the tap, then you give it one more twist, and the top comes off in your hand.

At that moment there comes a violent knock at the door. You are conscience-stricken. Do they know already what you have done? They must not find you with this beastly thing in your hand. You feel that you have broken the bath-room for ever. So in a nervous and weak voice you ask who is there.

The fact that it is one of your late rivals, who like an idiot wants to know if you have finished, is such a relief that instead of telling him what you think of him for asking tomfool questions, you say in a meek voice that you have not finished yet.

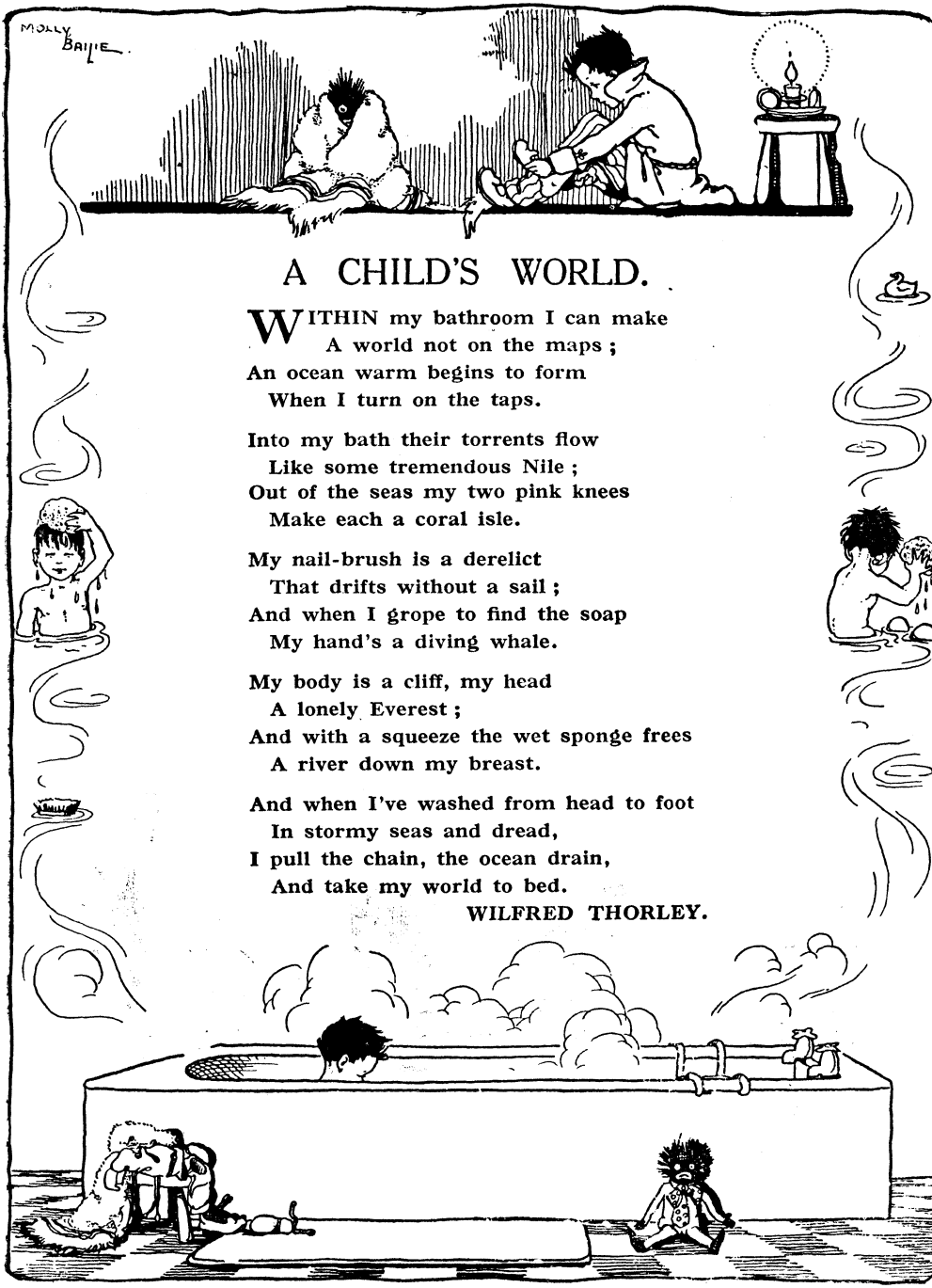
Before you have time to deal with him further, there is a sound of someone being taken violently ill close to you. More in terror than in sympathy, you turn sharply round, and the next moment a fountain of steaming hot water hits you in the face. Intense surprise, pain, annoyance, are the next emotions that overcome you. With a gasp, bravely fighting the steady stream of heat, after almost suffering the pangs of—er—of—er—scalding, with all the water forcing itself up your arm, you get the top of the tap back into its proper position, and the water condescends to fall into the bath.

When one considers all the things that might happen, such as water stopping as soon as you have the tap fixed, or the waste-pipe not working, and so on, you ought to be pleased that things have not been worse. For instance, there is the little matter of the bath having just been repainted. I know a sad story of the separation of a husband and wife. She had the bath repainted and never told him. Having separated the bath from his person, he left the house that morning and never returned.



THE TRAINED INTELLIGENCE.

SHE: Waiter, will you check these cherry stones for me? I make it next year.



A CHILD'S WORLD.

WITHIN my bathroom I can make
A world not on the maps;
An ocean warm begins to form
When I turn on the taps.

Into my bath their torrents flow
Like some tremendous Nile;
Out of the seas my two pink knees
Make each a coral isle.

My nail-brush is a derelict
That drifts without a sail;
And when I grope to find the soap
My hand's a diving whale.

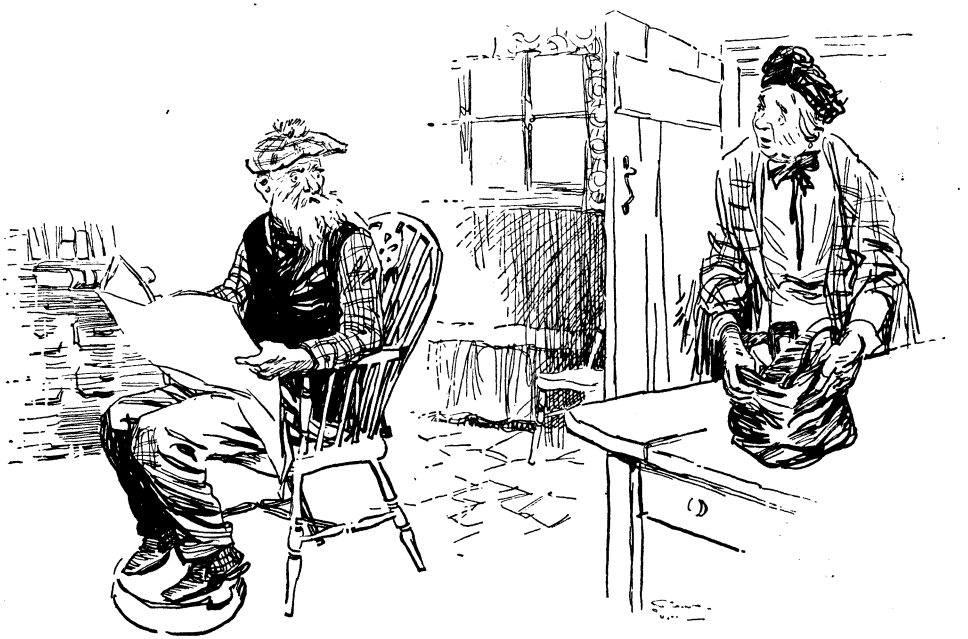
My body is a cliff, my head
A lonely Everest;
And with a squeeze the wet sponge frees
A river down my breast.

And when I've washed from head to foot
In stormy seas and dread,
I pull the chain, the ocean drain,
And take my world to bed.

WILFRED THORLEY.



DONALD : Ye've charged me seven days instead o' six in th' bill, doctor. Ye may remember I wus deleerious one day an' not aware o' your presence.



" I've gied a nice rabbit for y'dinna, Tam——"
" Did ye no remember t' hae th' shot r-removed before it wus weighed, wummun ? "

TRAGEDY.

By Arthur Groom.

WILLIAM NETLEY picked up his Sunday paper and scanned the headlines.

"Hum!" he mused, as he noticed on the front page that it was likely that he would have to pay more taxes in the future. "That will be awkward, but as I shan't be able to pay them, I needn't worry!" And he smiled a trifle grimly and lit a cigarette.

On the next page he read through a long news article dealing with the Russian Menace to the world with great composure, puffing contentedly at his cigarette.

"Perhaps it isn't true after all," he commented, and turned to another page.

"Well, I never did!" he exclaimed when he noted a large headline which informed him that a learned Professor had predicted the end of the world in February 1929. "That ought to cause a sensation! Anyway, it will end all our troubles at once."

Not bothering to read the text under the headlines, however, he turned his attention to the opposite page, but, barring the blood-curdling story of a murder which had occurred only a few roads away from his dwelling, there was nothing which was likely to disturb his peaceful Sunday afternoon.

For a while he continued to read in perfect silence, lighting yet another cigarette and composing himself more comfortably in his easy-chair. Then, quite suddenly, he sat bolt upright and his hands clenched on the edges of the paper.

"Heavens!" he cried hoarsely. "It can't be true. No, no! It simply cannot be!" He leaped to his feet and bellowed for his son.

"John!" he roared. "Go and get me another paper, any one will do except this. Hurry, now!"

John Netley grabbed at the coins his father held out and bolted from his parent's presence.

When he had gone, William Netley sank back in his chair once more and stared with glazed eyes at the paper spread out on his knees.

"I suppose it MUST be true," he muttered at length. "Yes, that last defeat must have caused it!" And he held up the paper once more and re-read the paragraph which told how the football team he supported had gone down to tenth place in the League Table.



YOU NEVER KNOW.

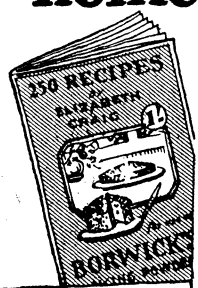
"The Court, please."

"Yessir, Buckin'am Pallis—Sloane Square—County—or Thames?"

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"My maid here stands next to me whilst I am writing this letter and says that since I have used it I look years younger. I always use it after washing every morning and before going to bed at night, and my skin has become much smoother and whiter, and my wrinkles have gradually disappeared.

"I write this letter in order to help the poor ladies who really want to know how to treat their skins, and to keep young-looking for a very moderate outlay instead of indulging in expensive beauty and massage treatments. This wax they can use themselves, and in a very short time they will be surprised at the difference it will make in their complexion. It whitens sunburnt skin, and for use on the hands it is most excellent.

"Yours truly,

"(*Signed*) MARIE THERESE, PRINCESS OF PLESS."

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ERMENTRUDE AND THE MUMMIES.

By Ada Leonora Harris.

ERMENTRUDE, our domestic treasure (she has been with us now for nearly two years), was doubtful how to spend her last monthly holiday.

She finally decided to visit the British Museum, having heard that it was a place one ought to visit once in a lifetime.

"Not that I think much of museums," she declared. "There's one down home. Jest a barrer load of rusty old bits of iron, and bricks and broken tiles that you'd think anyone'd be glad to give the dustman a trifle to take away, instead of putting it inside glass cases. Still, I've never seen a mummy, to the best of my knowledge. And I hear they've got quite a show of 'em there, ladies *and* gentlemen."

"Well," she remarked on her return, "it was better'n I expected in some ways. But disappointing in others.

"There was a lot of Roman Emp'rers and Emp'resses. Busts and busts of 'em. And, judging by the broken noses, they must have been a quarrelsome lot when alive.

"Some of the things were real old. There was a sort of dried-up-looking man in a glass case with some bits of crockery that I suppose he cooked in. He was old, if you like. I remember once seeing my great-grandfather when he was ninety-two. He'd have been a child beside this one. Pre-historical, they called him. Which means, I b'lieve, that he lived before the history books was printed. I dunno how 'twas, but he sorter gave me the horrors.

"Seems to me, they might jest as well have left him alone. Hope I don't dream of him.

"Oh yes," in answer to an inquiry, "there was mummies, all right. I was rather took in over 'em. And I wasn't the only one, either.

"There was a man going up some stairs, carrying a pail of something. And somebody, I s'pose he was having a game with us, calls out, 'Come on! They're going to feed the mummies!'

"I'd seen the lions and tigers fed at the Zoo, when I was a kid. So I started after him. So did a lot of others. Of course, I oughter known better. But I jest didn't think. For they was all as dead as doornails. Jest bundles of old rags and rubbish was what they looked like. A hundred years old, I should say, at the least. If not more.

"Anyhow, what I say is, when I'm dead, bury me decent. A parish funeral'd be better than that.

"I believe," she concluded, with a sniff of disdain, "that what that man had in his pail was jest whitewash."



AS MAN TO MAN.

DENTIST: Your face seems familiar, sir.
PATIENT: Yes, I'm the local income-tax inspector.
DENTIST: *Sit down*, please.

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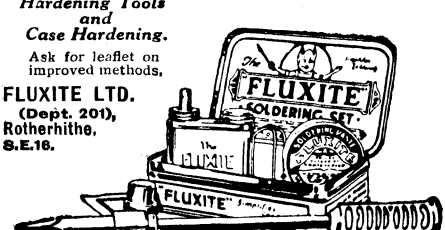
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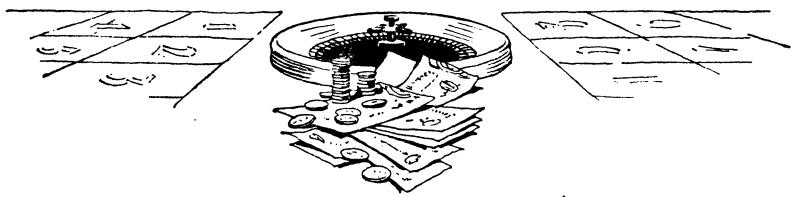
The Famous 'Cellist,

THE ATLANTIC ICE PATROL.



"'If you're ready, shall we go?' Swanne suggested." (*See page* 413.)

Lucky Number



By

JEFFERY E. JEFFERY

ILLUSTRATED BY W. BRYCE HAMILTON

MRS. GRADSHAW and party were lunching at the Café de Paris, which, as all the world knows, faces the Casino and is therefore at the life-centre of Monte Carlo. Mrs. Gradshaw, rich and widowed, was matronly in appearance and authoritative in manner. Her party consisted of her two daughters—Faith, twenty-nine and plain; and Patience, twenty-seven and vaguely pretty; her son Neil, twenty-four and pampered; and a poor relation, Lois Reveene, twenty-three and meekly beautiful.

It was agreed that to be lunching in the open air in mid-February was "simply marvellous," and then conversation languished. The two sisters, who were next each other, stared impolitely about them and muttered disparaging comments on the appearance and behaviour of persons at other tables; Neil, drinking more than his share of the Sauterne, wore a discontented frown, but chased Lois' foot under the table with his own and kept pressing his knee against hers. Lois, edging unobtrusively away from him, spoke quietly when spoken to—which was seldom—but not otherwise. Mrs. Gradshaw ate her lunch appreciatively. To her, food was as important as anything in life.

It was not until towards the end of lunch that she announced:

"By the way, Mr. Swanne left a message to say that he would be delighted to join our party for this gala dinner and dance to-night."

"Better if we stuck to our own countrymen, I should have thought," said Neil ungraciously.

"My dear boy!"—there was almost reproof in Mrs. Gradshaw's tone—"Mr. Swanne belongs to one of the oldest families in the Southern States. If it's a question of breeding—well, he's a cut above many of the Englishmen one gets out here nowadays."

Mrs. Gradshaw's people were distantly connected with the peerage and occupied an inch of Debrett under the heading "collaterals"—a fact which helped her to forget that the late Mr. Gradshaw's fortune had been amassed in the wholesale boot trade.

"Well, I don't like him, anyway," said Neil doggedly. "He's so mighty sure of himself."

"Meaning that he can generally prove you wrong," suggested Patience tartly.

"Oh, we can all see that you've fallen for him, Pat," Neil retorted. "But don't monopolise him all the evening. Give the others a chance."

"Now, now! Don't be silly, Neil!" Mrs. Gradshaw interposed warningly. She did not want what might yet be a promis-

ing affair to be jeopardised by ill-natured chaff.

"But I was only saying . . ." Neil began.

"Well, don't say it now," whispered Faith across the table, "because he's just behind you."

Sinclair Swanne greeted the party courteously. He was rather under thirty, tall, refined-looking, healthily tanned.

"I just had to come and thank you personally for your very kind invitation, Mrs. Gradshaw," he said, with the soft, alluring drawl of the true-born Southerner.

Mrs. Gradshaw beamed affably and pressed him to join them in coffee and liqueurs. He drew up a chair between Neil and Lois. To the latter he said:

"You were right and I was wrong on that point we were discussing this morning. I've looked it up in a Dictionary of Music."

"I thought so," said Lois quietly.

"Been arguing already, you two, so early in the day!"

Patience's smile attempted to be good-humoured, but there was surprised annoyance in her tone.

"Where and what about?" she added—to Lois.

But it was Swanne who answered.

"The point," he said, "was a rather technical one: the difference between a diatonic and a tonal fugue. And Miss Reveene's knowledge of musical theory proved more accurate than mine."

"That's what comes of arguing with a professional." This from Faith, with delicately contemptuous emphasis on the word "professional."

Swanne turned to Mrs. Gradshaw.

"If I hired a motor-boat, would you all come over to the Cap Martin Hotel for tea this afternoon?" he suggested.

Mrs. Gradshaw excused herself. She had some important letters to write. She also excused Lois.

"I promised her mother I wouldn't let her do too much," she explained. "She's not very strong, you know, and we have a late night before us. But I'm sure the girls and Neil would love to go."

The girls concurred that it would be "lovely"; Neil said, "Good idea," without conviction; Lois accepted her exclusion with a gentle smile.

"I'll call for you at your hotel at three, then," said Swanne. "That will give me time to arrange for a boat and to make sure that my old mother is O.K."

"And we'll all meet at the Casino at about six for a little gamble before dinner," said Mrs. Gradshaw—adding, when Swanne was out of hearing:

"Nice man, the way he fusses over his mother!"

"Soppy ass!" was Neil's agreeable comment.

On reaching her hotel, Mrs. Gradshaw bustled her daughters off to change their clothes (they were seldom allowed to remain in the same garb for more than an hour or two) and summoned Lois to her room.

"I want you to make a little alteration for me in my red evening dress before you lie down and rest, if you wouldn't mind," she said.

She made constant use of Lois' ability as a needlewoman—perhaps with the subconscious idea that the girl should do something towards earning her keep. But on this occasion she had another and more definite motive: she had something important to say to her.

Lois, kneeling on the floor beside her aunt, made the required alterations deftly and swiftly.

"Yes, that's much better," Mrs. Gradshaw agreed. "The lines of it were all wrong before. How clever you are!"

She slipped out of the red dress and into a silk wrap.

"Now if you'll just stitch it up again, it will do," she said.

Lois found needle and thread and set obediently to work.

"There's something I want to talk to you about," said Mrs. Gradshaw after a minute or two. You won't mind if I speak quite plainly, will you, dear?"

Lois raised her large, dark eyes from her sewing.

"Of course not, Aunt Hetty."

"It's about Mr. Swanne. I must be quite frank with you and tell you that your behaviour with him is . . . well, is not at all nice."

"Why . . . whatever do you mean?"

"Where did you meet him this morning in order to discuss—the theory of music, wasn't it?"

"In the Jardins Exotiques."

"By arrangement?"

"Of course not! I went up there with a book and he happened to see me. We talked for a bit and then we walked back here together. There's no harm in that, surely?"

"It all depends. I'm not blind, and I can

see well enough that you are deliberately encouraging him."

"I'm not!" protested Lois. "How can you say such a thing!"

"Because it's my duty to tell you that you are behaving in a very deceitful way. No, don't interrupt, please! I've done my best for you out here. I've never let you feel that . . . that there's any difference between you and my own girls—now have I?"

"But I can't help feeling it, all the same, Aunt Hetty."

"Well, that's your fault. But the fact remains that your parents are badly off and that you've not very good prospects. You're studying music now, I know, and you'll get a teaching post later on, we hope. But that doesn't amount to very much."

"There's nothing to be ashamed of in it, anyway."

Lois' tone was less meek than usual. There had crept into it, indeed, a suggestion of defiance.

"Certainly not. We all admire girls who earn their own living. But to pretend to a man like Mr. Swanne that you are an eligible girl on the same standing as himself is downright wicked—and you know it."

"But I haven't pretended anything! He knows I'm a student at the Royal College of Music. Do you expect me to go about saying 'I'm only a poor relation' to everyone I meet out here?"

"There's no need to be impertinent, my girl! But there's every need for you to behave yourself with Mr. Swanne. You're setting your cap at him, to use an old phrase, and I won't have it. Even if it weren't vulgar it's . . . it's almost immoral to thrust yourself in, as you're doing, when you know as well as I do that there's practically an understanding between him and Patience already."

"There isn't!"

Lois dropped the red dress on the bed and sprang up, her eyes blazing, her hands tightly clenched.

"There isn't!" she repeated. And then, as though she had suddenly realised the folly of such an indignant, emphatic denial, she added, lamely:

"Or at least I knew nothing of it, anyway."

"Well, you do now. And it's pretty obvious how disappointed you are. You thought you'd caught him for yourself, I suppose."

The elder woman stared pitilessly at her victim, stared with such provocative intent that at last she brought out the blush for which she had been hoping.

"Don't make matters worse by denying it. You're as red as a poppy and that's evidence enough, I should think."

"Aunt Hetty, please let me explain . . ." Lois began, but was cut short at once.

"No, I don't want to hear any more."

Mrs. Gradshaw, having driven her attack home, could now afford to relax the pressure.

"We'll let the matter drop," she went on, in a gentler tone. "I'm sure you didn't mean any harm—perhaps all this gaiety out here has turned your head a little—and I know I can rely on you to behave quite nicely in future like the good girl you are really. Have you finished the dress?"

"Yes, but I want to tell you . . ."

"Not another word about it—to me or to anyone else, you understand. Now run along and have a nice rest in your room, with your tea brought up to you. I'll meet you in the lounge at half-past five and we'll go down to the Casino together and wait till the others come."

And with that she patted Lois soothingly on the shoulder, pecked her cheek and pushed her gently from the room. Mrs. Gradshaw, as the late Mr. Gradshaw had had cause to know, was what is called "a managing woman." . . .

Alone in her room, Lois dropped on to her bed and abandoned herself to the relief of tears. This was humiliation greater than she could bear. Yet she would have to bear it, she reminded herself, miserably. With but two or three hundred francs in her purse she could not go to her aunt and say, proudly, "I won't be treated like this—I'm going home!" because she would have to add, humbly, "So please give me the money for my journey." Such was the price of dependence.

Home! She longed for it, longed for the dingy little West Kensington flat which she had left with such excited anticipation only three weeks earlier. Yet now she had come to wish with all her heart that she had never started. For this was not an isolated incident: it was a culminating point. Already she had endured much in circumstances which had been made difficult for her from the first. In many ways and on many occasions she had been subtly reminded of her status as a poor relation, as an object, so to speak, for charitable condescension.

Her aunt, until the outburst of that afternoon, had been kind—but patronising and

exacting too. Lois was expected to fetch and carry, to act as lady's maid, to be always smiling and cheerful and, if called upon, self-effacing. Faith and Patience had soon ceased to make any effort to conceal their dislike of their cousin. They were not openly rude; but their innuendoes, their whispered asides, their glances and sniffs, their sudden silences indicating disapproval, amounted, in the aggregate, to a slow torture practised upon the sensitive-minded Lois.

Then there was Neil—Neil who evidently considered that to a gallant such as himself his poor but handsome cousin was fair game. He was always making surreptitious love to her—trying to take her hand under cover of a motor rug or to press her foot under a table. He held her unpleasantly close when he danced with her; and on one occasion, catching her unawares, he had kissed her—odiously. She detested his advances. She detested his casual assumption that she should make herself cheap—for his benefit. But she was well aware that to complain to her aunt would be fatal. Mrs. Gradshaw doted upon her pampered, unhealthy-minded son.

And now, to add to all her other difficulties, she had to face this monstrous accusation with regard to Sinclair Swanne. They had made his acquaintance within a few days of their arrival and she had liked him at once. He had kind eyes and a very friendly smile. He was interested in other things besides gambling and restaurants and "smart" people—which were the Gradshaws' chief topics of conversation. He was interested, for instance, in music—and music was Lois' passion in life. He could lead her on to talk. Instead of ignoring her opinion, as her cousins did, he invited it and frequently deferred to it. He was cultured and well-informed and intelligent; and since the Gradshaws, for all their "smartness," lacked these qualities, it followed that on the occasions when he joined their party—and there were many—they tended to be rather out of it whenever mere small-talk was left behind.

She had liked him from the start. And now! Now she had been accused of encouraging him and of trying to catch him. She, with her pride and her reserved nature, with her shyness and her ignorance of this fashionable world, to be accused of being a husband-hunter! The very idea revolted her. She appreciated his friendliness and his kindness to her—that was all. But she had never thought of him in any other way.

Never? Lying there on her bed, miserable and angry as she was, she became aware that she was thinking of him differently now.

"You know as well as I do that there's practically an understanding between him and Patience."

Why had that statement drawn an indignant denial from her?

"There isn't!" she had said, braving Aunt Hetty's accusing stare, defying Aunt Hetty—and giving herself hopelessly away.

Because . . . because she could not bear to believe it. Because if it were true, then her heart would break. Because now she knew.

It could not be true! And yet . . . Like turns to like. He was rich—and so would Patience be. He was well-dressed—and Patience had taste in clothes. He had travelled and knew the world. So, too, had Patience. Like turns naturally to like. And what was she herself building her hopes upon? What right had she to build any hopes at all? On a common interest in music, on a chance discussion or two which had momentarily drawn his interest? But on nothing else: on no intimate look or word, no hint that he preferred her company to that of others, no suggestion that there was or would ever be anything behind his courteous, respectful deference to her. Courtesy, respect, deference? But what were these except a cloak for his pity—for the poor relation? . . .

She looked at her watch. It was after five. For more than two hours, then, she had been lying there brooding over her unhappiness. And now she had to face the ordeal of meeting him. With Aunt Hetty's jealous, watchful eyes upon her she would have to be doubly, trebly on her guard. Hitherto she had been able to be natural with him, for his charm of manner had banished her shyness. But now she could never be natural again. She would have to treat him coldly enough to satisfy Aunt Hetty's sense of what was "nice," yet not so coldly that the change would be obvious. And all the while she would be watching how he and Patience were behaving towards each other, all the while she would be reading significance into looks and words, hoping on, in spite of herself, and yet despairing because obviously she had no right to hope. The evening was to be a long-drawn-out torture which, somehow, she would have to endure

unflinching. For to flinch would be to give her secret away.

She dressed with more than usual care and at half-past five descended to the lounge—a victim garlanded for the sacrifice.

Her aunt inspected her critically.

"That dress suits you, dear," she said at last. "And you look all the better for your rest. Quite rosy, in fact."

Lois, aware of pallor and a threatening headache, did her best to smile gratefully. Aunt Hetty meant to be kind, no doubt. Or not? Was there a sneer of triumph beneath her compliment?

Mrs. Gradshaw, having established herself in a seat at a roulette table in the Salles Privées, turned to Lois and said:

"Keep a look-out for the others and tell them where I'm sitting, will you?"

Immediately afterwards she became absorbed in the play. With her, in spite of her riches, roulette was a passion. She seldom staked high, but she loved winning even more than she hated losing.

Lois moved away and stood where she could see the entrance. She felt tired and hot and utterly miserable. If only she could excuse herself from the party that evening, she was thinking. If only she could creep away to bed and by some magic means wake up to find herself safely in the haven of her own home!

It was after half-past six when the others arrived. There had been such a good band at the Cap Martin Hotel, Patience informed her, that they had stayed on and danced after tea. It had been "too marvellous" coming home in the twilight by motor-boat. What a pity poor Lois had had to miss it all!

A pity indeed! thought Lois, with a quick, searching glance at Patience. Patience was looking pretty, animated, pleased with herself. Had it happened, then? Was the understanding now complete? But Lois did not dare to look at Sinclair Swanne. Not in his, of all eyes, would she read her death-sentence. She led them to the table where Mrs. Gradshaw, whose luck was in, was sitting with an imposing pile of counters before her.

The rooms, which had been crowded, were emptying a little. Faith secured a chair beside her mother, Patience one on the opposite side of the table. Swanne stood behind her—Lois noted that at once. She herself remained beside her aunt, with Neil leaning over her and finding an excuse to lay his hand on her shoulder now and again when he stretched forward to drop his counters on the board. His touch revolted her . . .

A voice beside her was saying:

"There's a seat vacant there now, Neil. Grab it quickly. I'm not playing for the moment."

Swanne had left Patience and had moved round to her; and Swanne, by the exercise of the god-like power that was his, had persuaded Neil into a chair and had taken his place beside her. Whereupon she became acutely conscious that her nerves were on edge.

"You look tired," he said sympathetically. "The way they stoke up these rooms is enough to exhaust anyone."

"It is hot," she agreed. Miraculously she had succeeded in addressing three words to him in a natural tone!

"Come for a stroll outside, then," he suggested. He was speaking into her ear. He was almost whispering. And across the table she saw Patience watching them.

"No, I'll stay here, thank you," she answered him, with just the right amount of chilling politeness in her voice.

Yet she had wanted to accept his invitation. It was going to be easier than she had expected, then, this ordeal of hers. But had she really wanted to be alone with him outside those stuffy, crowded rooms—alone with him to be asked, perhaps, to congratulate him on his engagement to Patience? Why had he suggested a stroll? Kindness, courtesy—pity, merely? She was glad that she had declined. At least she had avoided incurring Aunt Hetty's further wrath.

"Rien ne va plus." The ivory ball gave its death-rattle and fell into its destined slot.

"Vingt-sept, rouge, impair et passe," intoned the croupier and began to rake in counters.

"Look!" said Swanne. "Mrs. Gradshaw is in luck. She had that number fairly plastered."

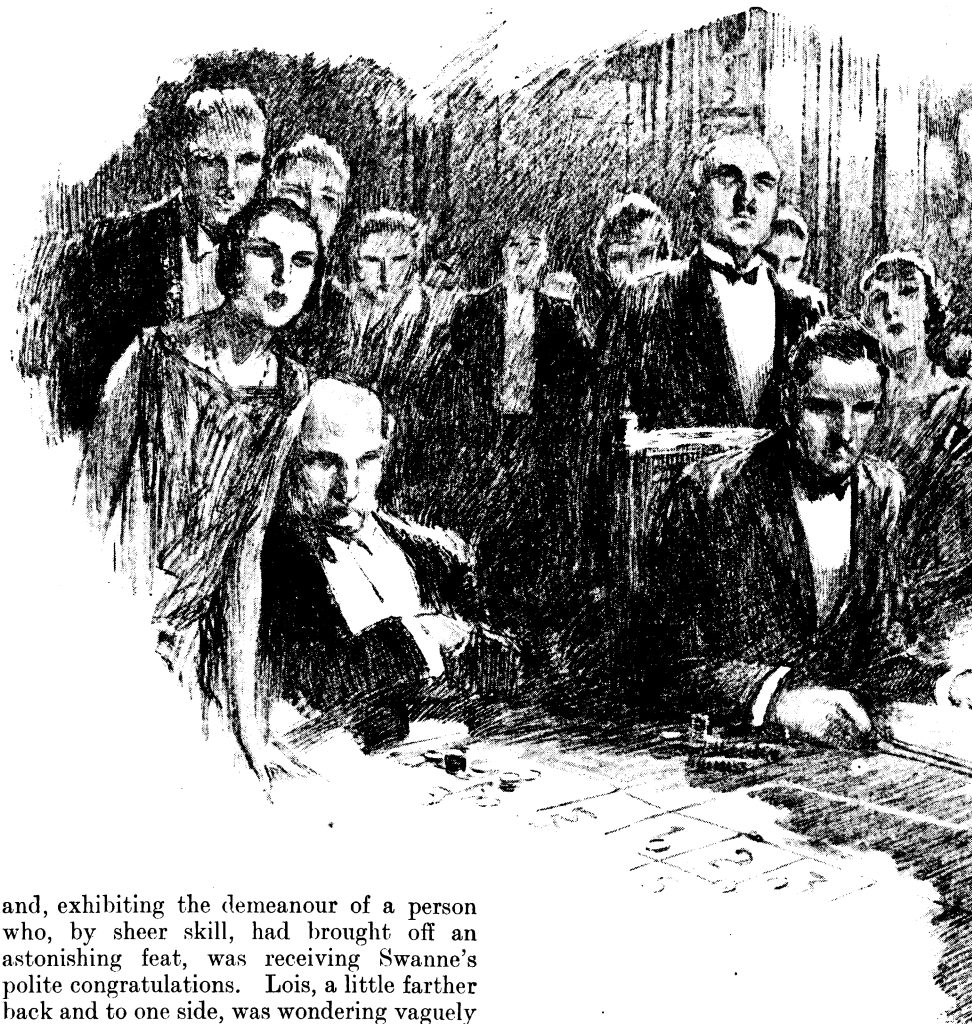
Mrs. Gradshaw, beaming, received winnings amounting to several thousand francs.

"Pour les employés," she announced, graciously handing a louis to the head croupier, who, in the time-honoured way, held out the box into which tips were placed and invited an onlooker to put the counter in.

"Merci, madame," he said with a polite scowl, unmistakably implying that twenty francs was a miserably inadequate recognition for such a coup.

"Faites vos jeux." The wheel was set spinning again.

Mrs. Gradshaw, half turned from the table



and, exhibiting the demeanour of a person who, by sheer skill, had brought off an astonishing feat, was receiving Swanne's polite congratulations. Lois, a little farther back and to one side, was wondering vaguely why her aunt had not " backed her luck," as was her habit, by leaving at least some small amount on the number on which she had just won. A single counter, a louis, lay *en plein* on 27, placed there, as Lois had observed, by a hard-featured, over-painted young Frenchwoman sitting next to Patience on the opposite side of the table.

" Rien ne va plus." On this occasion the croupier rapped out the phrase at the last second before the ball rattled and fell—into 27.

" Vingt-sept, rouge, impair et passe."

The croupier remained impassive, but there were exclamations amongst the crowd of players and spectators. For the same number to come up twice running was unusual.

" Well, I *am* in luck ! " cried Mrs. Gradshaw, to Lois' astonishment, and a moment later she and the young Frenchwoman opposite were both claiming the 700 francs due to the winning louis on 27.

" Mais, c'est à moi, ça ! " protested the Frenchwoman angrily.

" Non, je vous dis. C'est à moi ! " retorted Mrs. Gradshaw with the utmost confidence.

Even croupiers are fallible at times, and it had so chanced that no one of the four at the table had seen who had placed the stake on 27. Both women appealed to the head croupier, who rang his bell and suspended the game. A crowd collected from other tables. Two bulky men, wishing to see what was happening, pushed their way in front of Lois and blocked her view. But she could follow the course of the dispute—and she was



"Mrs. Gradshaw rose majestically, flung a contemptuous glance at her scowling rival, and strode towards the *caisse* to change her counters into money."

horrified. For she was certain, she was as certain as she was of her own name, not only that her aunt was in the wrong but that she knew herself to be in the wrong. There had been a moment, a fraction of a second only, just after she had exclaimed "Well, I *am* in luck!" when Mrs. Gradshaw's expression had indicated, as clearly as if she had admitted the fact in words, her sudden realisation that she had forgotten to stake on that throw. And Lois had caught that expression and interpreted it. Her aunt was cheating!

The dispute, meanwhile, remained unsettled, and the *chef* was sent for. He listened gravely to the arguments of both parties—Mrs. Gradshaw asserting that she invariably backed a number after she had won on it *en plein*, the Frenchwoman retorting, with abusive references to "les sales Anglais," that the stake was certainly hers. Finally the *chef* gave his august and generous decision.

"Eh bien, il faut payer toutes les deux," he announced.

The full amount was then paid out to both disputants and the game was allowed to proceed. But Mrs. Gradshaw, having gained her point, played no more. She rose majestically, flung a contemptuous glance at her scowling rival, and strode towards the *caisse* to change her counters into money. Her party, with Swanne in attendance, followed her.

It was he who tactfully cut into her angry outburst against "the dirty foreigners" by suggesting cocktails at the Café de Paris.

"Perfectly monstrous!" Mrs. Gradshaw began again as soon as they were seated. "As though I'd forget to back a number after I'd won on it! I always do. That brute of a woman—having the impertinence . . ."

"I didn't see her put anything on anywhere—and I was next her," said Patience. "Dirty cheat!"

"And a demi, too!" put in Neil.

"It's always the way"—this from Patience—"they try it on foreigners in the hopes that they can't speak French and won't dare to make a fuss."

"Exactly!" Mrs. Gradshaw agreed. "But I won't stand for it, that's all."

They rattled on. But Lois, with her mind in a turmoil, sat silent. She was amazed and horrified. That her aunt, her ultra-respectable aunt, who had more money than she knew what to do with, should stoop to cheating rather than admit herself mistaken—it would have been incredible had it not been so painfully evident. And by now—such was the strength of her power of self-persuasion—she had no doubt almost convinced herself that she really *had* staked on that number! But that would only make the situation harder for Lois—if she were asked her opinion. For if she were asked she would have to tell—the truth.

"Oh, God! Spare me this trial!" she prayed.

But she was not spared. Suddenly Patience turned to her.

"You're very quiet, Lois. Perhaps you disapprove of mother's attitude in the matter. Perhaps you think she ought to have knuckled under to that beastly woman."

Lois became aware of many eyes upon her. She flushed.

"Why, upon my word I really believe she does disapprove! Do you, Lois?" It was Faith who shot out the question.

Eyes, eyes upon her! And the blood surging up into her face and neck. But she nerved herself.

"Yes, I do," she said quietly.

"Why?" demanded Patience fiercely.

"Because I happened to see the other woman put the louis on 27."

"Lois, how dare you say that!"—from Mrs. Gradshaw.

"Well, I'm hanged!"—from Neil.

"Liar!"—from Patience.

"Of all the cheek!"—from Faith.

But from Sinclair Swanne no word at all.

Then was she set upon. Who, pray, was she to take so much upon herself? Did she realise what sort of woman the other was? A vulgar little demi-mondaine! So likely to be honest, wasn't she? And if four croupiers had failed to see her stake on 27, it was so *very* probable, wasn't it, that Lois would have seen? Was she aware that her aunt had been playing roulette every season for years and had never made a mistake of that kind? Lois did not, presumably, accuse her of deliberate dishonesty?

Lois, white as paper, with her hands clasped on her lap, sat silent under the storm. And Swanne, looking very discomfited, sat silent too. It was Patience who said, after a sharp glance at her:

"She does, Mother. Look at her! She does believe you were cheating!"

"Do you?" Mrs. Gradshaw hurled at Lois.

There was dead silence for a moment.

"I saw what happened—exactly what happened," Lois answered slowly. "You were talking to Mr. Swanne and pou forgot to stake. I'm sure you thought you had done so because when 27 turned up again you said: 'I *am* in luck!' And then . . . then you remembered that you hadn't backed it."

"How could you possibly know that?"

"Because I saw the expression on your face. You realised you'd made a mistake. Only . . ."

"Only what?"

"You wouldn't admit it."

"It's a wicked lie!" said Patience.

"Leave this to me," Mrs. Gradshaw interposed. "I can only hope, Lois," she went on, "that you are out of your senses for the moment. But all the same I don't intend to put up with this. You will go straight back to the hotel now, please, and stay in your room until I decide what I can do with you."

Without a word Lois rose. Whereupon, surprisingly, Sinclair Swanne rose too.

"I'll see you safely back, Miss Reveene," he said quietly. He turned to Mrs. Gradshaw, "And I'm afraid you must excuse me from your party to-night," he added.

"Oh, but, Mr. Swanne," she protested, "you mustn't take this little contretemps too seriously. I'm very sorry it should have happened in front of you. But I hope you won't judge us all by . . . by Lois' behaviour."

"I'm judging you," he said slowly and firmly, "by your own, Mrs. Gradshaw. As it happened, I also saw what occurred. Miss Reveene has told no more than the truth. And that being so I must ask to be excused to-night. I shall probably be leaving for England to-morrow."

"But . . ." Mrs. Gradshaw began. Ignoring her, he turned again to Lois.

"If you're ready, shall we go?" he suggested.

Outside the café he took her arm.

"That was unpleasant," he said quietly. "It's upset you, I'm afraid. Would you like a carriage?"

"I'd . . . I'd rather walk," she faltered. She was trembling now. But she was exalted. For she had been justified. She had been upheld. *He* had upheld her. By the mercy of God he, too, had been a witness.

They had turned into the ornamental gardens and had begun to climb the hill towards her hotel. Presently he said:

"That was very brave of you, you know."

She answered: "No. But I . . . Oh, I'm so awfully grateful to you for supporting me as you did and so thankful that you saw what happened!"

"I didn't," he answered calmly.

Astounded, she stopped short on the gravel path.

"You didn't! But, then, why . . . what made you say you did?"

"Because I knew you were speaking the truth."

"But how could you know that? Why I more than Aunt Hetty?"

He turned her gently towards him and stood looking at her. She found that both her hands were in his.

"Because I love you," he said gravely.

Her heart seemed to miss its beat. She dropped her eyes.

"You pitied me—that was all," she corrected.

"Pity! Does one just pity the person one admires more than anyone in the world? Won't you look at me, Lois dear?"

She raised obedient eyes to his.

"I didn't dare . . ." she began.

"Dare to what?" he demanded, with his arms closing round her.

"To hope," she whispered—against his lips: and had no need, and no chance, to say more for a full minute.

"But what am I to do?" she asked at last. "About Aunt Hetty, I mean, and all that."

"See here, Lois! You haven't to worry any more about her," he answered. And there was in his tone a calm, protective assurance which was bliss to her. "You're coming back with me to my hotel, right now, to be welcomed by my little old mother. We'll get a room for you and then I'll go up to your place and tell your aunt. Maybe she'll be sore, but we won't mind that. I'll arrange to have your things packed and sent down. And to-morrow you and I and Mother will quit here on the Blue Train. How long does it take to fix up a wedding in your country, Lois darling?"

"But I can't do that!" she protested, laughing. "I'm absolutely dependent on Aunt Hetty. I haven't any money."

He laughed back at her. "Well, you'll have to overdraw in advance on the allowance your husband is going to make you," he answered. "Anything else that's worrying you?"

"No," she admitted, truly enough. She

had never thought to be so happy in her life.

"Then come along."

They turned and began to walk downhill again through the gardens.

"Twenty-seven!" said Sinclair Swanne, thoughtfully. "It's curious that it should have been twenty-seven."

"Why?" she asked.

"My age last birthday, that's all. And it's going to be our lucky number all our lives, my very dear."

PERIWINKLE BLUE.

I ALLUS likes the time o' year,
When Periwinkles be in bloom,
I watches for the first blue glint
From out the window o' my room.
Then, if so be, the days am warm,
I reaches for my stick an' goes
Along the garden path to where
My patch o' Periwinkle grows.

It minds me of th' day long gone,
When I wur but a bashful lad;
And Prue' she wur a slim young lass
Who smiled at me and made me glad.
We had na' spoke a word o' love,
We just stood there—I looked at Prue',
Then at the flowers, and blurted out,
"Your eyes be Periwinkle blue."

Folks sometimes smiles, an' shrugs an' says,
"The old man's thinking of his Prue"
(But one or t'other minds to come
An' tend an' trim that patch o' blue).
They thinks an old man dreams *old* dreams;
Ah! they can't see my dainty Prue',
My bride, who drifted out, an' closed
Her eyes o' Periwinkle blue.

And sometimes when I sits and thinks,
I wonders what the end will be,
How such a weary worn old man
Will greet a maiden such as she.
Will I be young an' strong again,
To meet my lassie when I goes?
I canna' tell, I must na' fret,
I leave it all to "One who knows."

G. SYLVIA CHAPMAN.

IS CIVILISATION PROGRESSING?

By the Rt. Hon. J. RAMSAY MacDONALD, M.P.

"The Windsor" is non-political. It must not be assumed that we either agree or disagree with our distinguished contributor. His thoughtful article merits unbiassed consideration.

SOMEONE reporting upon a recent visit to Angora assures us that the Turk there is at last beginning to welcome the blessings of civilisation. "So this is a telephone!" he exclaims. "So this is a typewriter! So that is a four-wheeler! How happy we are to behold the achievements of civilisation! How lucky you are to live in the midst of them always!"

"So this is civilisation!" we may in our turn exclaim.

The fact is that civilisation is a word of convenience used very commonly for self-flattery, rather than a word of precision used for accurate description. It does imply, however, what Matthew Arnold called "the humanisation of man in society," and when we ask whether civilisation is progressing our answer must be determined by that test. Civilisation cannot be judged in human power but in human qualities; not in opportunities made available but in opportunities taken.

But, behold, the test itself is not a very



[Topical.

AT LOSSIEMOUTH, HIS NATIVE PLACE.

definite one, for who can say in what humanisation consists? Good manners? Surely; but is anything at once more pleasant and more delusive? Individual freedom? Certainly; but equally essential is what is so often regarded as its opposite, social control—and that often imposed for reasons which the individual may not hold to be sound. General comfort? Truly; but that is purely relative, as there can be no contentment where there are great challenging contrasts. All that these hesitating reflections amount to, however, is that mankind has not yet reached its cherished goal of perfection; that it sees a few steps ahead but is aware that it may either miss its way or step out incautiously; that humanisation is not a simple, one-sided affair.



[*Topical.*

IN CAP AND GOWN AFTER TAKING HIS DEGREE AT GLASGOW UNIVERSITY.

Civilisation is the sum of the gain which mankind can reap from co-operation and mutual trust and aid. It is the characteristic product of society, and the question at the head of this article, in reality, is whether society is fulfilling its purpose.

What casts even a fleecy cloud of doubt on our minds as to our answer?

The ageing have always at a period of their lives become aware that they are emigrants from the Past into the Future, and then they lift up their voices from their drifting barques in praise of the old land they are leaving—a land which they never appreciated until it had sunk below the horizon. But the ageing always live in an unreal world. They are not accurate reporters of the past nor inspired prophets of the future.

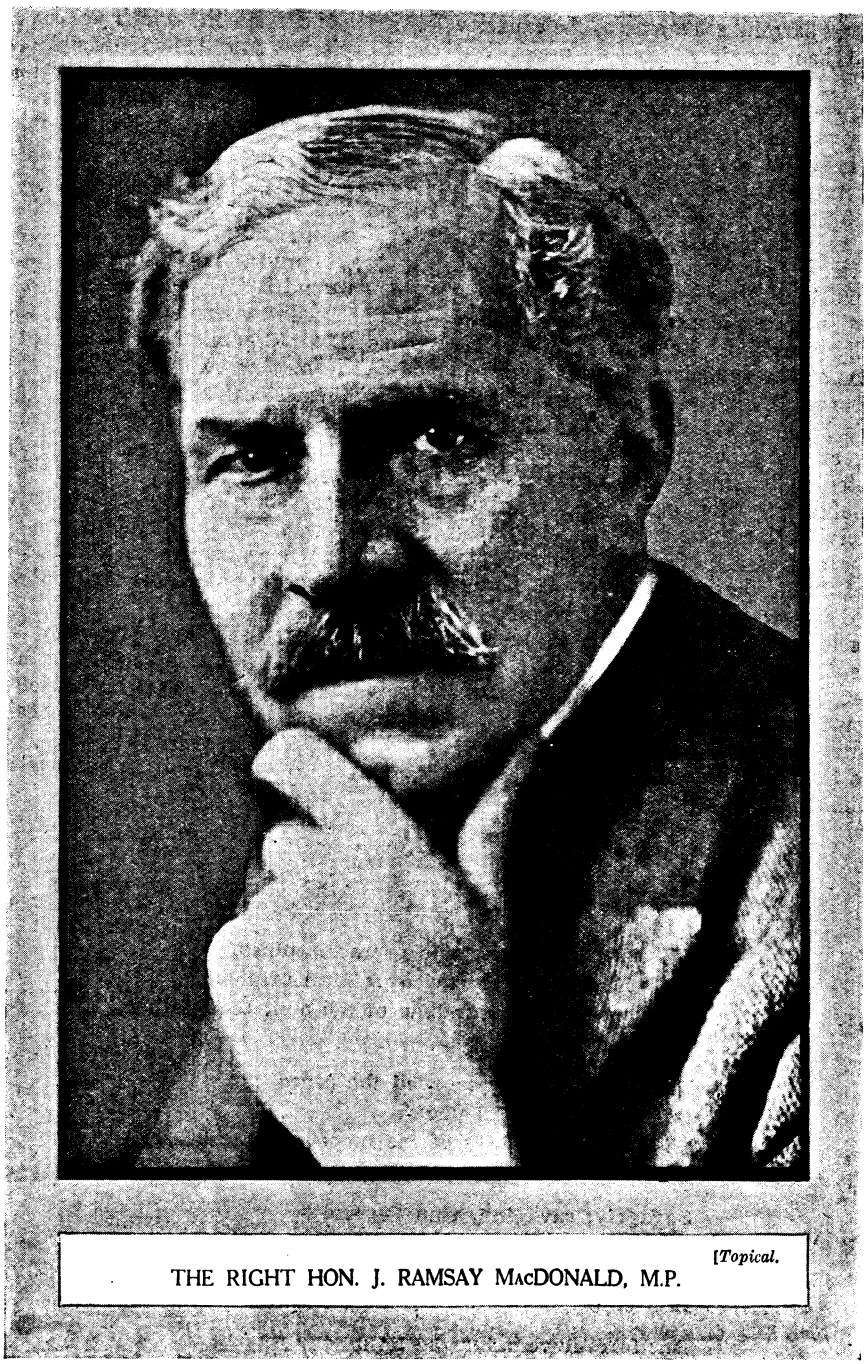
With them is a fellowship of what may be called "the socially unborn," who never have *lived* in any world, though they are wandering about in this, knocking their shins and their heads against its corners, and proclaiming that all creation is a mistake and that the freely flowing words by which they lay down the law to an audience at a fireside ought to have been the thoughts of Him who made us.

But others have doubts of a different kind. They know how delicately balanced is the system of civilisation, how into its equilibrium enters not only the strength but the weakness of man, and how easily it might be shattered like glass. Civilisation depends on the equilibrium of a structure which is as unstable as a top that stands up only while it spins. If a top could think of why it spun, I am sure it would fall.

What greatly troubles these observers is the over-emphasis, certainly for over a century, of the material and economic power and efficiency of civilisation. "Prosperity" seems to be tending to crush out those human qualities which are like fine scents and distinctions in personality; and in so far as they survive it is in Byzantine and vulgar forms seen in a wide range of manifestation, from the huge prices given for pictures and manuscripts that are valued

as badges of culture to the decadent entertainments and conduct that commend themselves to so many people nowadays.

drains us of our vital intelligence and leaves us incapable of using leisure for growth in grace. The motor-car, for instance, has not



[*Topical.*

THE RIGHT HON. J. RAMSAY MACDONALD, M.P.

Our subjection of the powers of nature has put us into a new servitude—a mentally and physically wearying servitude—which

given us more free time but more engagements—and threatens to ruin the countryside as well. We can *do* more but *be* less.

Education has widened our freedom to choose interests, but the advances of civilisation which accompanied it have increased both the possibility and the attractiveness of cheap and harmful selections. The capacity to read has certainly swelled, under bad guidance, the crowd of those who are, strictly speaking, "mentally deficient."

Moreover, an important element in the maintenance of the equilibrium of civilisation is tradition and habit—a fact that is both fortunate and unfortunate. Such events as a world war disturb that centripetal force, not by any means for good. The experiences of war make a young generation more iconoclastic than nature normally provides. Logic is mistaken for wisdom, and a syllogism shatters practical experience. A kind of packed jury of half-baked schoolmen sits in judgment on social habits, and the cohesive bonds of society are voted to be irrational on grounds that are useful only for copy-book headings. Thus, civilisation and what it depends upon are regarded as artificial, as the manifestation of "the dead hand," or as having stepped beyond reason and become to one school antiquated and to another decadent.

There is much truth in this, and many contemporary developments show it. If we concentrate our thoughts on these manifestations the title of an old book of delightful common-sense will commend itself to us: "Civilisation—Its Cause and Cure."

We need not be pessimistic, however. A growing number of people is aware of the danger of "Prosperity" and the economic control of human life which are features of civilisation to-day. Power over nature and power to make things precede the power to use them to humanise man in society. In that respect we have more opportunities to be civilised than our grandfathers, if we would only use them. As regards war, the most business-like destroyer of the material basis and the social habits of civilisation, we shall have more chance during the next few years to end it than ever man has had. If this be a wild-oats generation, well, there are signs that there will be a reaction on to a higher level than that from which the wild-oats themselves were a reaction. The progressive impetus comes from failure as well as from success, from discarded mistakes as well as from embodied gains. There must be periodical reactions against habit because humanity requires to be assured by new experiences that the wilderness is indeed a wilderness and that vanities are truly vanity.

Should even the worst come and Empires totter and fall because they have lost their way and find themselves in barren places where there is no sustenance to their soul, civilisation, Eastern or Western, will still progress, for the fall of Empires is not the fall of worlds.

PINE-FELLING.

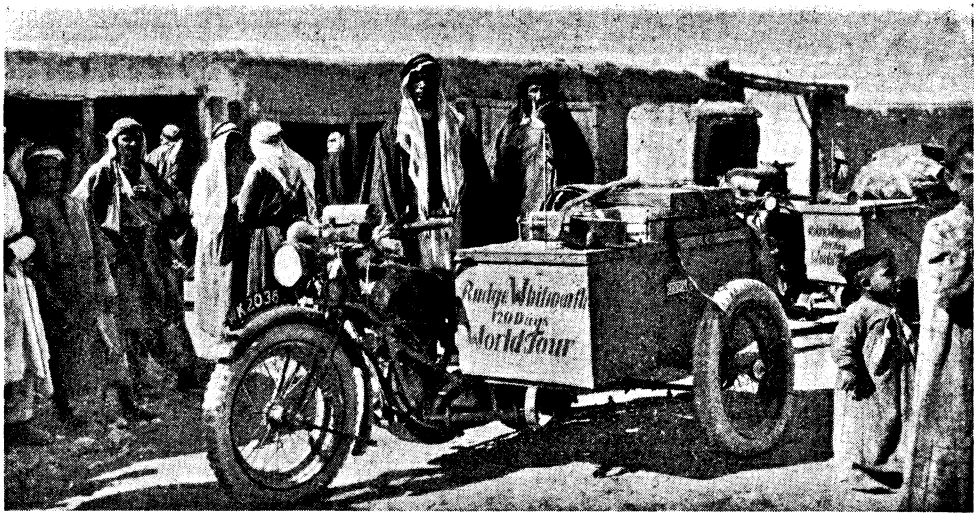
TENDERLY, slenderly grew the pines,
Each brow sunned over, and bright
With the strong dear kiss of the sun, their father,
The lord of light.

Dreamily, sleepily crooned the pines
Beside the peaceful pools
With the gentle kiss of the moon, their mother,
Weaving her wools.

Savagely, ravaging, rips the axe
With swinging stout and deft,
And one by one they are broken, broken,
And emptiness left.

But forever remains the light
That loved them, December or June,
The strong fierce heart of the sun their father,
And their mother, the moon.

GEOFFREY JOHNSON.



ARABS INSPECTING THE MACHINE DURING THE LONG JOURNEY THROUGH THE SYRIAN DESERT.

ROUND THE WORLD BY MOTOR-CYCLE

By S. T. GLANFIELD

Mr. Glanfield rode round the world, alone for the greater part of the distance, on a 3½ h.p. British motor-cycle and sidecar.

Photographs by the Author

WITH Flight-Sergeant S. W. Sparkes I set out from London on the 2nd July, 1927, to ride round the world in 120 days. Just eight months later I returned alone, after a series of adventures I could not have imagined in my wildest dreams.

On the eve of the start we worked all night to get our outfits ready and were glad to set out next morning only an hour late. By " blinding " to Folkestone we caught the boat for Boulogne, where for the first time I set foot on foreign soil. Hard riding over long, straight roads brought us to Amiens before nightfall, and as we had not started before midday we were encouraged in an ill-founded optimism that was soon to be rudely shattered. This was almost the last occasion on which we were abreast of our time schedule.

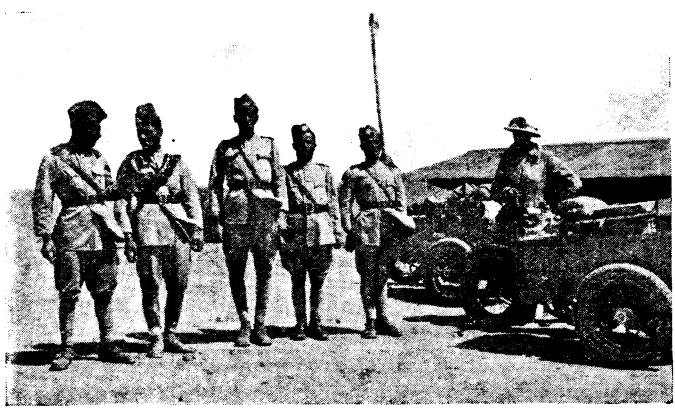
Our route took us across Europe to Constantinople, via the Syrian Desert and Mosul to India, Port Darwin and Sydney, and home across the Pacific and the United States. Our object was twofold : to demonstrate the virtues of an ordinary British motor-cycle, taken from stock, and to study trade conditions overseas with regard to the motor-cycle industry.

From the first our journey did not lack

incident. Near Compiègne we rounded a corner at high speed, to discover, a few yards ahead, a level crossing over which a train was steaming. A sudden application of the brakes and " broadsides " right across the road saved us, but it was a breathless moment.

The following day my machine caught fire and I had visions of a summary end to the trip. Fortunately, the fire extinguisher proved equal to the occasion.

A series of delays ensued. Neither I nor my companion knew a word of German, so we had to draw whatever we required. Sparkes made a glorious discovery, however. He found at our Strasburg hotel that as soon as he had finished one beer the waiter brought him another. Thus encouraged, he consumed six at a sitting.



GUARD AT THE IRAQ FRONTIER.

Striking a bad hole in the road shortly before we reached Vienna, my frame broke, and after dismantling the machine, we had to wait for whatever assistance might turn up. Exhausted after a long, hot, dusty ride, I lay down beside " Nippy," as I called my mount, and fell asleep.

Presently a passing car stopped, and the occupants, seeing me full length by the roadside, with pieces of motor-cycle littered in all directions, assumed the worst. They were unmistakably annoyed when they found that I was not dead.

In point of fact, our sidecar bodies proved far too heavy and several minor breakages occurred. So when we arrived at Vienna, we decided to substitute bodies of lighter construction, and, of course, had to wait while they were built. Altogether, of our first nineteen days, ten were lost in repairs and alterations.

With weight cut down in every conceivable way, we hoped to make better progress, but the roads through Hungary were bad beyond description, and those in the Balkans worse. Several times in Serbia we struck potholes which literally threw us out of the saddle. Then we would hold on grimly with the right hand in order to throttle down and prevent the machines running away, while crowds of boys looked on, no doubt making the most caustic comments in their native tongue.

July 22nd was a typical day. Called at five o'clock, we breakfasted and were on the road by six. Yet when we stopped at seven o'clock that night we had covered a mere 65 miles.

At Sofia we decided to have a thorough overhaul of our battered mounts, but time hung rather heavily in the evenings, and I introduced the " Black Bottom " dance. Before we left it had become the rage in the Bulgarian capital.

We had been warned of Turkish officialdom and were soon to realise to what lengths it could go. Entering Constantinople on August 15th, we were not allowed to cross the Bosphorus to Haida Pasha, on the Asiatic side, until the 24th. That early morning crossing was unforgettable. All around was the sea, of a deep, bluish green, while away in the distance, through the lifting haze, stretched the magnificent panorama of Constantinople, veiled in the rosy tints of the rising sun.

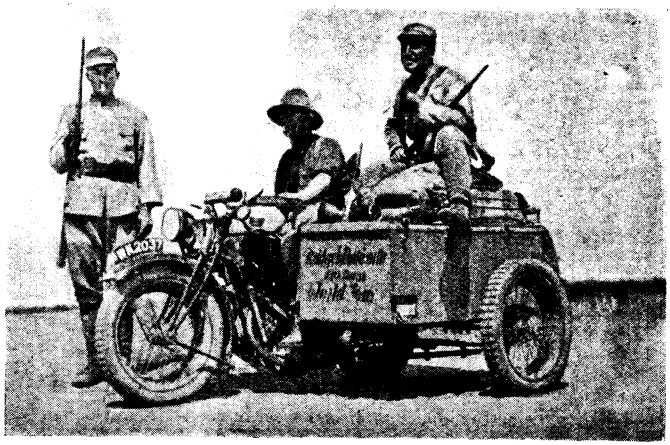
But our troubles soon recommenced. We were compelled to travel for some distance by train, lest we spied on the Dardanelles fortifications, and then, to reach the frontier town of Payas by the route prescribed by the police, we had to strike across country over a rough, boulder-strewn track, frequently traversed by dried-up river beds and gullies.

Eventually we made a bee-line for the sea, after which we followed a rocky coastal path which, towards evening, brought us to Payas. Here we were informed that we must go back to a tiny place called Deurtyol and obtain police sanction to leave the country.

Despite vigorous protests, we had to

return in the darkness over a dangerous malaria-infested track, each with an armed guard on the back of his machine. No one would attend to us that night, and next morning we found ourselves under open arrest. It was some time before we could persuade the Chief of Police to verify our statement that we had reported at Adana.

At one time, dashing along the excellent road from Alexandretta to Aleppo, we were astonished to see at our side the original Roman road, with its huge granite slabs in a state of perfect preservation, and still laid with amazing precision.



CONDUCTED BY MILITARY ESCORT THROUGH THE DRAGOMAN PASS.

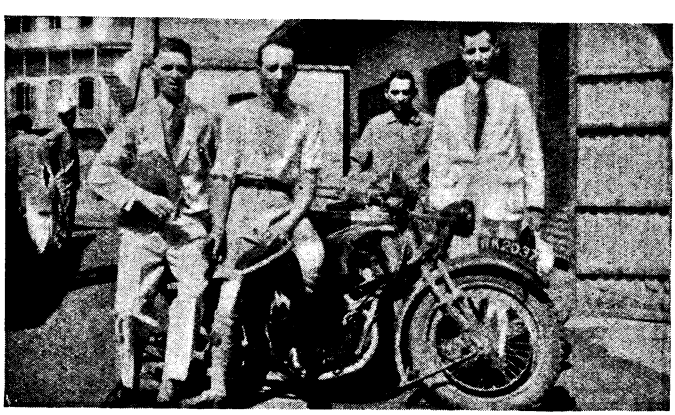
Sparkes, unfortunately, had already suffered a great deal from stomach trouble, and after we passed Aleppo and emerged into the open desert this was aggravated by the intense heat and the arduous nature of the journey.

Crossing our path were numerous " wadis," or dried-up water-courses, which we could only negotiate by speeding down the near side in order to gather sufficient impetus to carry us to the top again. After one such dash I happened to look back, and saw Sparkes lying on the ground, with his overturned machine, at the bottom of the wadi. The damage done was repaired, and we continued—there was no possibility of giving Sparkes much relief.

Soon afterwards my sidecar spring gave way, and at each jolt the body jammed my knee painfully against the tank. There was nothing to be gained by riding slowly, so we went on as fast as we dared until about an hour after dark, when a French desert patrol forbade us to travel farther that night, and insisted on our accepting their hospitality.

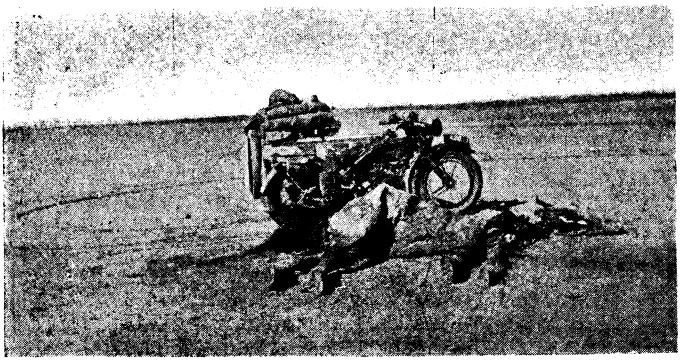
Many of the Arabs were inclined to be hostile. Once we stopped in the village of Tel-e-Far, hoping to obtain water and refreshment. Too late, we noticed the threatening mien of the crowd which collected, and Sparkes, who was ahead and had not quite stopped, rode off at full speed. He could have done no good by staying.

Not knowing what to expect, I tried to gain time by handing round a tin of fifty cigarettes. It was returned practically empty, but the attitude of the Arabs changed from hostility to indecision, and they relaxed their vigilance. Without waiting to learn their intentions, I quickly started up and burst through them. Later, at Mosul, we learned that the last white visitors to Tel-e-Far, the crew of an armoured car, had been massacred to a man.



FLIGHT-SERGEANT S. W. SPARKES (LEFT) AND S. T. GLANFIELD (IN SHORTS) JUST BEFORE THEY PARTED COMPANY AT BOMBAY.

Sparkes was still far from well, and I fell a victim to sandfly fever, being put into the R.A.F. Hospital at Mosul with a temperature of 104. Here I remained for three days until my temperature was



HAVE YOU EVER SEEN A DEAD DONKEY?

Here is an authentic picture of one taken in the Australian desert.

normal, and then, against the doctor's orders, continued the journey, because I simply dare not lose more time.

From Basra to Bombay we travelled by ship, and here Sparkes and I parted company. His leave was fast expiring, and he was obliged to push home by the shortest route, while I, according to plan, crossed India to Calcutta, and passed through the East Indies to Australia.

With the Desert crossing fresh in my mind, I was assured that Australia would be a still more formidable obstacle, and determined to cut down weight once again. Even when I had finished the load on my sidecar was from six to seven hundredweight, and I was amazed that the frame had not given way altogether under the terrific bumping it had received.

The delay at Bombay bore good fruit, for I made wonderful progress across India. I would not miss the opportunity of seeing the famous Taj Mahal, and this cost me half a day. The rivers were all flooded, for it was the end of the monsoon, and often I had to dismantle my outfit to cross a stream, while for most of the time it was raining as it can only rain in the tropics. To make things worse, I had several minor mechanical troubles, due to the incessant wet and mud, and once lost three hours working in the road.

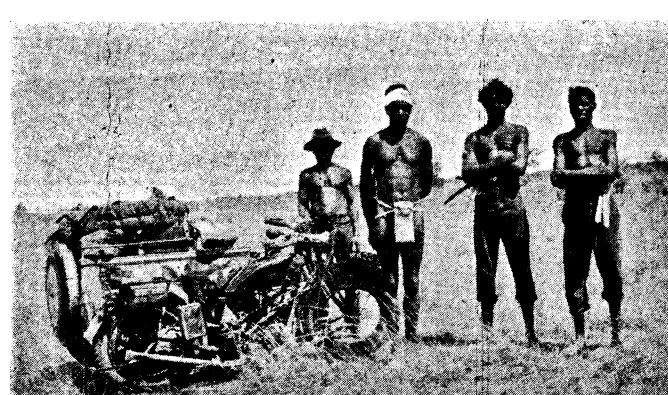
Nevertheless, I averaged 300 miles a day, Taj Mahal and all, and reached Calcutta something of a personage on account of my record "blind" across India. The evening after my arrival I saw "The Whole Town's Talking" from the Viceroy's box at the principal theatre of Calcutta.

Another sea voyage followed to Penang, whence I rode through the jungle to Singapore. For practically the entire distance it rained harder than I had yet known, while the vegetation towered so high and thick on either side that I was riding in dense gloom even at midday.

One evening I arrived at the famous "Spotted Dog" Club at Kuala Lumpur, and having taken my first meal since breakfast, pushed on at once, as I was anxious to reach Northern Australia ahead of the monsoon.

Before I had gone far I ran into a flooded area. Already wet to the skin, I waded through more than one flooded river, and once or twice the current was so strong that I feared "Nippy" would be washed away, leaving me alone in the jungle, in the middle of the night, I knew not how far from civilisation. So at the next place I came to I turned in on the cement verandah of a Chinese junk shop, and slept for a couple of hours in my soaked clothing.

Waking up, stiff and cold, I remounted, but could make little headway, and alighting again, waited for dawn.



AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINES.

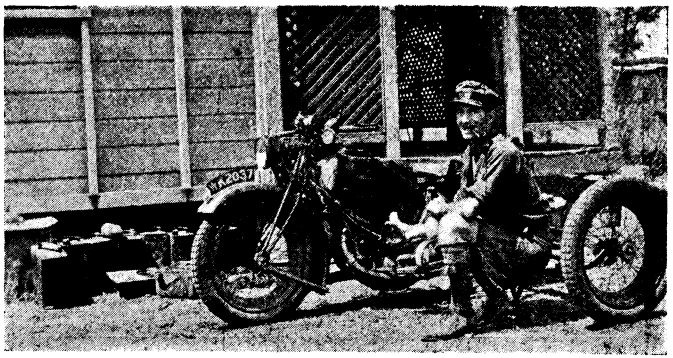
They had just been hunting kangaroos with the boomerangs seen in their hands.

From Malacca to Singapore the road was better, but the rain was as bad as ever, and it was bitterly cold. To get this stage over, I drove through everything, and did not even stop to photograph the native huts, built on piles, with motor-cars garaged beneath.

The last seventeen miles, over a smooth, straight road, were covered at a steady mile a minute. Never had I been so glad to reach a destination. When I described my sleep by the roadside I was told that search-parties were always sent out for people missing at sunset, as the jungle was full of snakes and wild animals of every description. But when I went on to say that I had plunged into rivers my listeners could scarcely believe me, for every stream is infested with crocodiles, and nine times out of ten my venture would have ended fatally. "Where ignorance is bliss . . ."

After a quick ride through Java, I took ship again, bound for Port Darwin.

A week later I arrived in Australia, and set out next day on the transcontinental run to Sydney. I soon found that the startling accounts I had heard of conditions here did not overstate the facts. I had failed to outdistance the monsoon, which moved southward with me. The track, which at first ran through dense bush, was boggy, sandy and rocky in turn, and became worse the farther I went. It was broken by numerous creeks which I had to take at some speed.



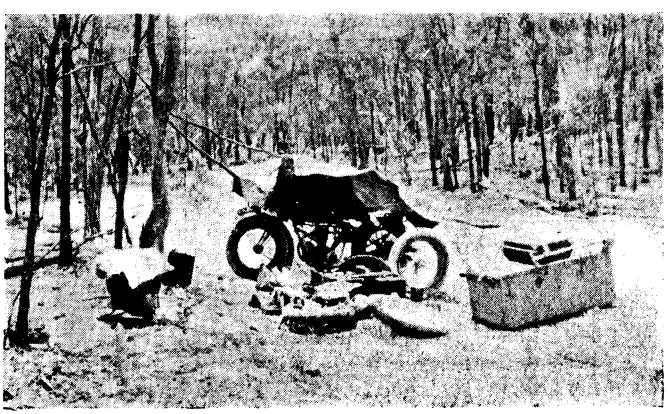
ONE OF MANY STOPS TO REPAIR DAMAGE IN AUSTRALIA.

After thirty miles, I struck one of these too slowly, and stuck fast. Fortunately, I had brought a shovel, but it took two hours' work to clear away the mud, unload the sidecar, and pull the outfit clear with the aid of a long piece of timber. Later that day, when I was exhausted with steering the heavily-laden machine under the most fatiguing conditions imaginable, I was bogged a second time—an experience which befell me more times than I can remember before I reached Brisbane—and the effort to get out was almost beyond my strength. That night I slept the sound sleep of utter weariness at a wayside homestead.

A few days out from Darwin, I came to an unusually bad creek, which I could find no means of avoiding. Not many miles away was the railway line, so driving back to it, I walked along the permanent way until I saw two loose sleepers, and returned with this booty tied to the sidecar. With these, and plenty of stones and sand, I made a precarious bridge and descended safely.

On the far side, however, the wheels refused to hold the slippery surface, and I was ditched. This meant that I had to unload the sidecar, lift the machine back on to my improvised bridge, and start the rush up the bank from the very bottom. It speaks volumes for the motor-cycle that I just got over.

That night I camped in a railway shed.

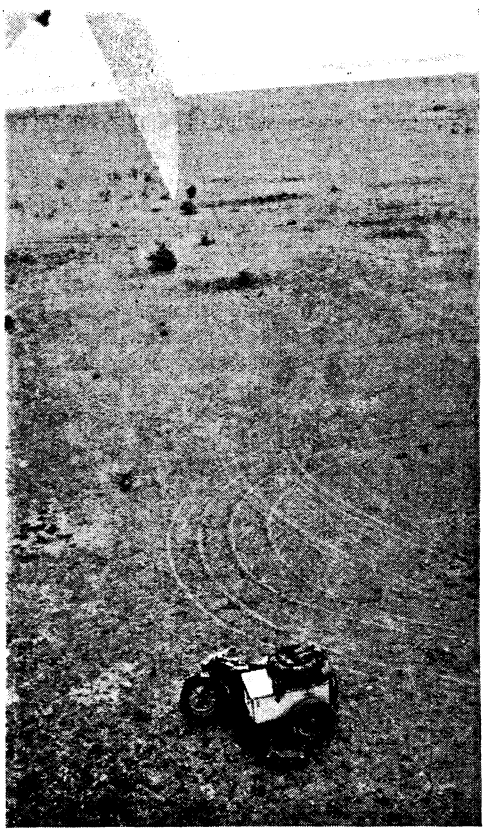


ROADSIDE REPAIRS.

It is impossible to effect roadside repairs in Northern Australia without some such shelter.

One hardship followed another. One day I rode over sand so broken up by ridges that I had to creep along in low gear; the next I wrecked my gearbox on the huge boulders which covered the track leading over a succession of rocky hills.

At Camooweal I found a young fellow named Carter who wanted to reach the Queensland railhead, so I took him with me for company. His weight and that of his gear made progress slow, but the track was



"NIPPY" SEEN FROM THE TOP OF A WATER-BORE IN AUSTRALIA.

fairly good, and several times he helped in crossing creeks.

Two days after we left Camooweal, on a particularly stony stretch, we jolted badly in a pothole, and Carter was shot off. At the same time my foot slipped and was crushed under the machine. The pain was excruciating, and at first I thought my ankle was broken. It was perfectly useless, and the nearest doctor was at Boulia Hospital, 200 miles away. Obviously I must reach Boulia without delay, so, bidding Carter farewell at Dajarra, the railhead, I set out on a nightmare ride. Every jolt made me sick with pain, but that was trifling compared with the difficulty of crossing creeks; there were several which could not be avoided.

Two days in hospital worked wonders, and I resumed much sooner than I had anticipated. For a week I made moderate progress, and then disaster took a new form. From Blackall, in Queensland, the track was covered with sand for many miles. Some fifty miles out, seeing a level patch, I opened out almost for the first time in Australia, and suddenly hit a hidden tree-stump, which sheared off the sidecar wheel, causing the entire outfit to turn over and over three times. One of the controls punctured my leg, which bled profusely.

After binding it up, and taking a photograph of the overturned machine, I looked round for the missing wheel. To my astonishment it was nowhere to be seen. Nearly an hour later I found it a quarter of a mile away, absolutely intact, even to the spindle! I have never been able to explain how it rolled that quarter-mile.

With such speed as was possible I made Tambo, where my wound was cleaned and stitched, and I was detained three days. Setting out against the doctor's advice, I experienced no change of fortune, and still failed to put in a single day's straightforward riding.

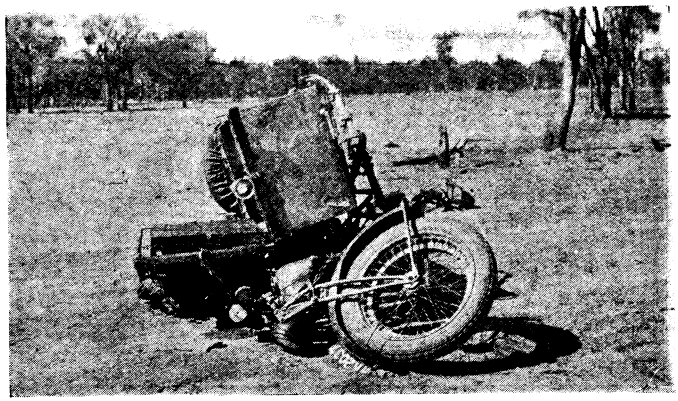
There is an end to all things, and a few days before Christmas I was met outside Brisbane by a bevy of motor-cycle enthusiasts, including Frank Arthur, since famous in England as the most successful of dirt-track riders.

The 800-mile run to Sydney passed without accident; but, anxious as I was to reach Sydney before Christmas, I asked a little too much of my engine. Three miles from my destination it broke down, and I believed repairs would take some time to carry out. Not wishing to disappoint the crowds which I knew awaited me, I telephoned for assistance, and a powerful combination was sent to tow me in, only to break down before it reached me. A second man hurried out, but came to grief in taking a sharp corner.

Meanwhile I had persuaded "Nippy" to make a last effort, and she responded with such goodwill that I rode in under my own power. It was worth coming a long way for the reception those warm-hearted "Aussies" gave me.

After three weeks in Sydney, largely

occupied with business discussions with representatives of the motor trade, I crossed the Pacific and started the final dash from Los Angeles to New York. This, made in mid-winter, took just a fortnight. Day after day I tore through an atmosphere the temperature of which was well below zero, against storms of sleet and rain driven by a biting head wind, which not only reduced my speed, but chilled me through and through. From time to time I had to break icicles from my clothing.



AFTER THE CRASH.

The sidecar wheel rolled a quarter of a mile over the smooth sand.

In trying to end this stage quickly I nearly brought it to a premature close. Shortly after crossing the Mississippi at Cairo, I was riding alongside the railway, racing a freight train to a level crossing. It was late evening, and away in front I saw two blazing headlamps, which I took to be those of some big car on the other side of the crossing.

Suddenly a piercing whistle ahead warned me that the lights belonged to a train approaching from the opposite direction. Instinctively I braked hard, but immediately it flashed on me that I could not pull up in time on that slippery, ice-covered road, so I opened flat out, made a desperate rush at the level crossing, and passed perhaps ten yards in front of the oncoming monster!

A week later I was on the *Olympic, en route* for England.

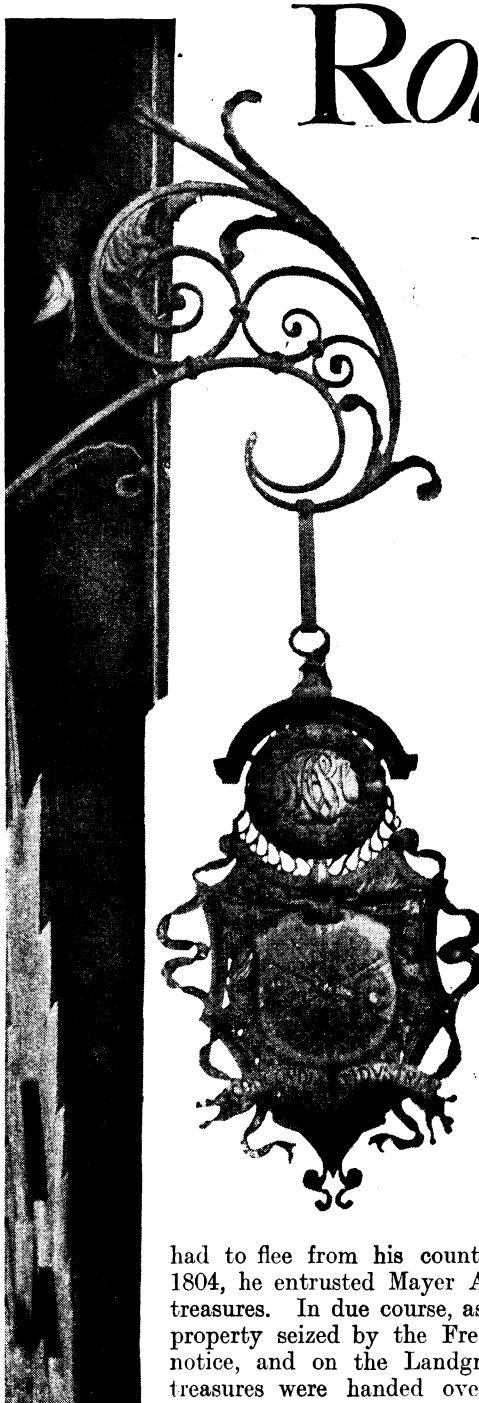


A CHANGE FROM THE TROPICS.

Even this attire was insufficient when the rider passed through the United States in the depth of winter.

The Romance of the Rothschilds

By A. H. VALENTINE



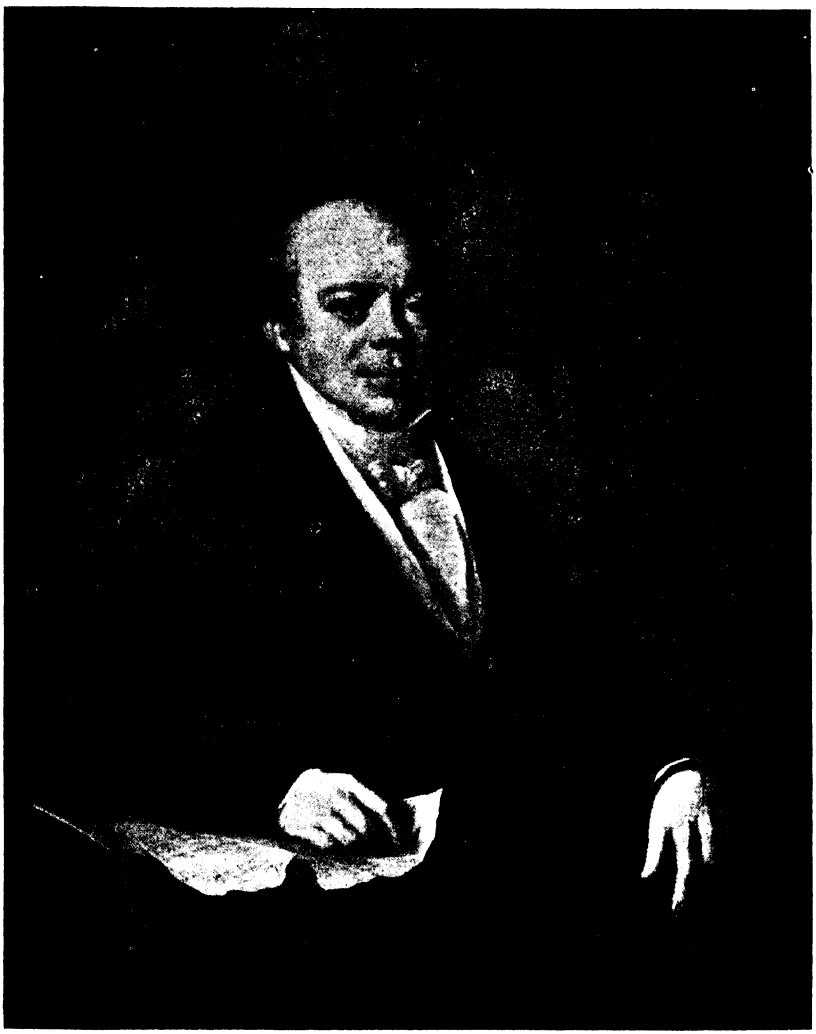
IN St. Swithin's Lane, a surprisingly secluded thoroughfare within a stone's throw of the Bank of England, stands New Court, the most famous private bank in the world. It is the headquarters of Messrs. N. M. Rothschild & Sons—the English house of the Rothschilds—a name honoured alike in the worlds of finance, benevolence, the arts and sciences, and the Turf.

The founder of the House was Mayer Amschel Rothschild, whose romantic rise from comparative obscurity to fame and affluence reads like a chapter from a story-book.

In the middle of the eighteenth century there stood in the Judengasse (or Jewish quarter) of Frankfort-on-the-Main, a quaint four-storey building, with pointed roof, which bore a striking resemblance to one of the old houses in Holborn Bars. The front of the house was adorned with a Red Shield—in German *Roth Schild*—hence the origin of the name. This house was both the dwelling and the business premises of Mayer Amschel Rothschild, a small banker and general dealer in works of art, curios, coins and general produce. Throughout Frankfort he was known as a shrewd man of scrupulous integrity. His reputation for straight dealing and commercial honesty had attracted the attention of the Landgrave, or Elector, of Hesse Cassel, then reputed to be the richest man in Europe. When the Elector had to flee from his country to Denmark after the Battle of Jena in 1804, he entrusted Mayer Amschel Rothschild with all his gold and art treasures. In due course, as he expected, his house was raided and his property seized by the French, but the Elector's fortune escaped their notice, and on the Landgrave's return to Frankfort the money and treasures were handed over intact to him by Rothschild, some con-

temporary writers say plus interest. This incident was the turning-point in Mayer Amschel's career and laid the foundation of the fortunes of the family.

Mayer Amschel Rothschild was assisted in the business by five sons, and in order to extend their sphere of operations he sent them to open branches in four of the principal cities in Europe—London, Paris, Vienna and Naples. Rothschilds were soon after established on a solid foundation in Germany, England, France, Austria and Italy.



NATHAN MAYER ROTHSCHILD,
The founder of the English house of Messrs. N. M. Rothschild & Sons.

The founder of the English firm of N. M. Rothschild & Sons was Nathan Mayer Rothschild, the third and unquestionably the most famous of the five sons. In 1798, at the early age of twenty-one, he came to England, not ostensibly for the purpose of opening a branch of the banking business, but as the outcome of a dispute with an English firm with whom the Rothschilds were transacting business.

Although the Rothschilds at the time were bankers and dealers in bullion, they were also general merchants and they dealt largely in cotton. Lancashire at that period had practically a monopoly of supplying the Continent with cotton, and taking advantage of this, the Manchester cotton merchants often treated their Continental clients

in rather cavalier fashion. The Rothschilds, having had experience of this insular method of business, it is said from a Manchester commercial traveller, Nathan decided to cross the Channel and treat with the firm directly. The story of his coming to England was told by himself years afterwards to Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton, who took a leading part in the Emancipation of the Slaves. The history is given in one of Buxton's letters and it was presumably a conference between Sir Thomas and Rothschild on the question of the Slave trade that brought them together. Writing to his sister on February 14, 1834, about thirty-six years after Nathan Mayer's arrival in England, Sir Thomas says:

"We dined yesterday at Ham House to meet one of the Rothschilds, and very amusing it was. He (Rothschild) told us of his life and adventures. He was the third son of a banker at Frankfort. 'There was not room for all of us in that city,' he said. 'I dealt in English goods. One great trader came there who had the market all to himself; he was quite the great man, and did us a favour if he sold us goods. Somehow I offended him and he refused to show me his patterns. This was on Tuesday. I said to my father: "I will go to England." I could speak nothing but German. On the Thursday I started. The nearer I got to England, the cheaper the goods were. As soon as I got to Manchester I laid out all my money, things were so cheap, and I made a good profit. I soon found out there were three profits—the raw material, the dyeing and the manufacturing. I said to the manufacturer, "I will supply you with material and dye, and you will supply me manufactured goods." So I got three profits instead of one, and I could sell goods cheaper than anybody. In a short time I made my £20,000 into £60,000.'"

From this incident it will be seen that Nathan Mayer Rothschild early gave evidence of the business acumen that was to make him in later years one of the cleverest and shrewdest operators in the financial world.



[From an old print, by courtesy of the Alliance Assurance Company.

OLD PREMISES OF NEW COURT, 1824.

The view shows Nos. 4 and 2, the respective residences of Nathan Mayer Rothschild and his brother-in-law, Sir Moses Montefiore.

In Manchester Nathan remained engaged in various branches of the firm's business until 1805, when he transferred to London and opened offices in St. Helen's Place, Bishopsgate. In the interval he had become a naturalised British subject. In 1809 he removed his offices to New Court, St. Swithin's Lane, and since that date New Court has been a household word in the City of London, synonymous with all that is noble and honourable in the greatest commercial city of the world.

In those days—the beginning of the nineteenth century—it was the custom for many of the most prominent men in the City, as well as professional men, the bankers, stockbrokers, merchants, shippers, writers, doctors and scientists, to live in the City, very frequently above their business premises—and this happened in the case of Nathan Mayer Rothschild. New Court was not only the headquarters of the great banking firm, it was also the residence of the family. Nathan Mayer Rothschild had married the sister-in-law of Sir Moses Montefiore, the great philanthropist, who was also

Sir William Schooling, in his interesting history of the Alliance Assurance Company, which was founded by Nathan Mayer Rothschild and Sir Moses Montefiore in 1824 at their offices in New Court, states that No. 2 New Court was " a typical merchant's house, roomy and comfortable, three stories high, not counting attics and basement, with two rows of five windows each, and one of four windows on the ground floor, when the business offices were organised. The annual rental was £96 for No. 2, and £40 for No. 4. The rates in those days were twopence in the pound."



[From an old print, by courtesy of the Alliance Assurance Company.

CAPEL COURT, SHOWING ENTRANCE TO THE OLD STOCK EXCHANGE, 1829.
The Alliance Assurance Company's offices to-day occupy both sides of Capel Court.

at that time a power in the City. The two brothers-in-law lived at New Court—Sir Moses at No. 2, Rothschild at No. 4, facing each other. New Court then consisted of a small block of substantial houses with an imposing courtyard. It may be mentioned *en passant* that New Court was originally the name of a court or alley in St. Swithin's Lane. In searching for its origin, I discovered that the first reference in the City records occurs in Strype's *Survey of London* in 1720, although, curiously enough, there have been half a dozen New Courts in the City of London at different periods.

By this time Nathan Mayer Rothschild had made a name for himself as a financier of the highest standing. He had established his banking business on the soundest basis and his organisation was perfect. Especially was this so in his methods of securing early and accurate information of important events on the Continent. For this purpose he established a regular News Service.

He had couriers who rode in haste to New Court, arriving at all hours of the day and night, and bringing despatches from the Continent, whence they had been conveyed

by swift sailing vessels in which Rothschild was interested. Carrier pigeons were also employed. "It was five o'clock one morning," we are told, "that a courier arrived from France with the news of Napoleon's escape from Elba. . . . On such occasions nightcaps would appear at upper-storey windows, and there would be uncomplimentary references to the Banker's disturbing enterprise." A picture which tells a story of the



"A PILLAR OF THE EXCHANGE."

Nathan Mayer Rothschild standing at his old pillar in the Royal Exchange.

habits and customs of the City in those days.

Rothschild was enabled to give the Government their first information of the victory of Waterloo. He had his own agents near the battle-front, and one at Ostend, on hearing of the defeat of Napoleon, chartered a special boat to bring him across the Channel with the news. But this exclusive information from Rothschild to Downing Street was not confined to Waterloo. Talleyrand, writing in 1830, said:—"The English Cabinet always obtain their information from Rothschild ten or twelve hours before the arrival of Lord Stuart's despatches, and this is not to be wondered at, seeing that the vessels which carry Rothschild's courier belong to that firm, take no passengers, and start at all hours." Talleyrand did not perhaps know that one of the principal channels of news was the carrier pigeon post service from the Continent that Rothschild inaugurated.

"Another source of excitement," says Sir William Schooling, "was the periodical arrival of bullion and specie for Nathan Rothschild. These were usually carried by the Royal Mail coach, the guard of which, a taciturn giant, named King, was looked upon with awe by all the clerks and apprentices in St. Swithin's Lane."

With regard to the bank building, the present dignified premises of New Court were built about seventy years ago. The interior is embellished by wooden panels let into the walls of all the rooms, and the bank itself is built round an old city churchyard, which at first sight has the appearance of a garden belonging to the building. One of the features of the existing New Court is the famous courtyard, which closely resembles that of the old New Court, from which it was probably copied.

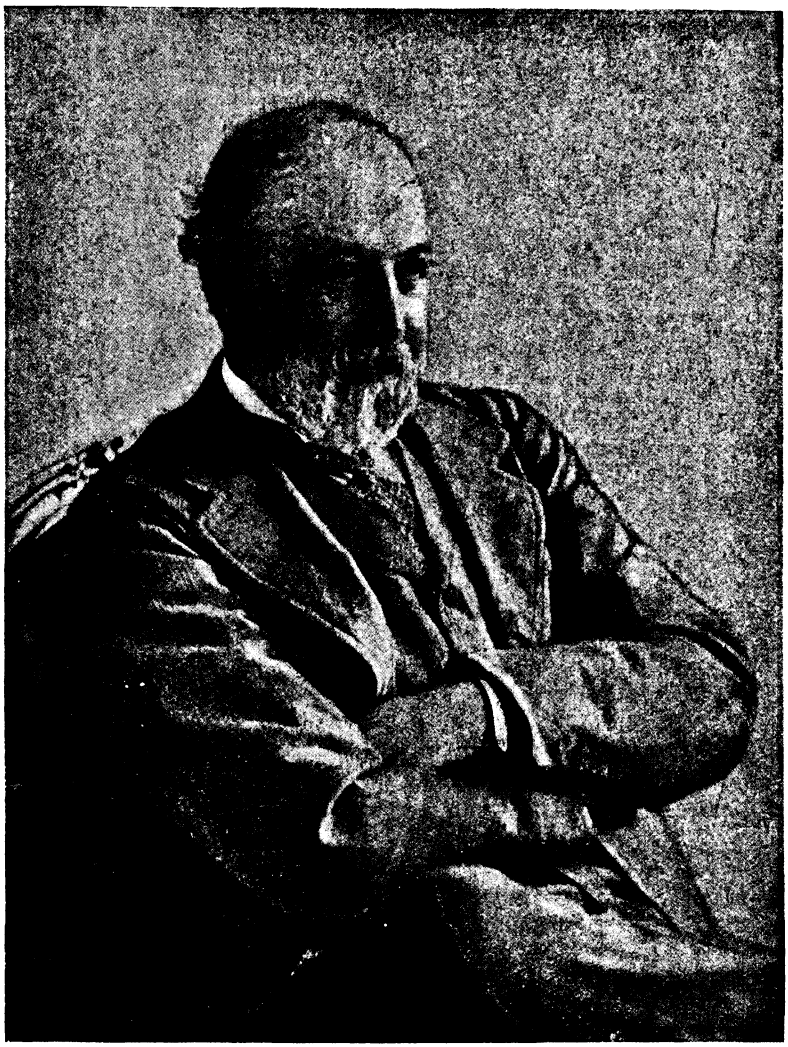
With all his great position in the City, Nathan Mayer Rothschild lived a most simple and unpretentious life. He was made a Baron of the Austrian Empire by the Emperor in 1822, but seldom used the title. When he removed his private residence from New Court, his modest and retiring disposition asserted itself and, instead of taking up his residence in Mayfair, he went to reside in a beautiful house in the more prosaic neighbourhood of Stamford Hill. Subsequently he removed to Piccadilly, after having resided temporarily at Kingston House, Knightsbridge, and later purchased the lovely estate at Gunnersbury Park, but he never lived there.

Nathan Mayer Rothschild died in 1836, leaving four sons, Baron Lionel, Baron Anthony, who afterwards became a Baronet of the United Kingdom, Baron Nathaniel and Baron Mayer de Rothschild. All were born and bred at New Court.

On his father's death Baron Lionel de Rothschild became head of the firm. Although he was a most regular attendant at New Court, he took a great interest in politics and a conspicuous part in the struggle

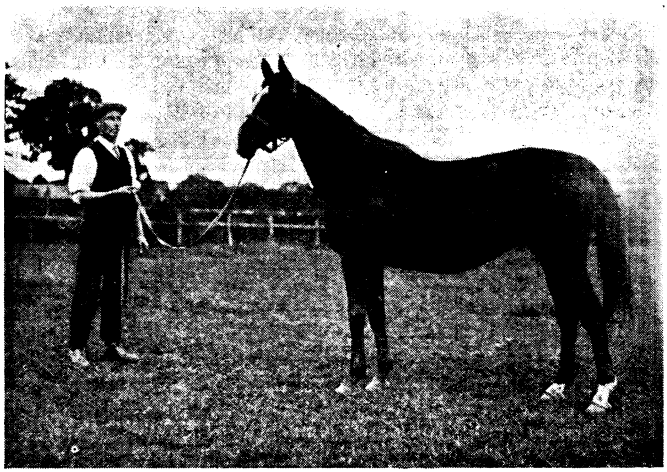
for Jewish emancipation. He was the first Jew elected as a Member for Parliament—being elected with Lord John Russell in 1847 for the City of London. He was not, however, allowed to take his seat, without taking the oath "on the true faith of a Christian." He was returned to Parliament for the City of London time after time, but it was not until 1858 that the Jews' Disabilities Bill was passed, and Baron Lionel de Rothschild was the first Jew to take the amended form of oath in the House of Commons, as years after his eldest son, the late Lord Rothschild, was the first Jew to sit in the House of Lords. Baron Lionel, like other members of the family, was known throughout the world for his philanthropy, and he it was who made New Court the centre and headquarters of charity, especially in times of national misfortune.

Like so many others of his family, Baron Lionel de Rothschild took a great interest in racing and hunting. The Rothschild stag-



THE LATE LORD ROTHSCHILD,
A former head of the firm of N. M. Rothschild and Sons. The first Jewish Peer.

hounds were for several years one of the attractions of the hunting families of Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire, which came to be known as the "Rothschild Country." Although not racing on an extensive scale, he carried off the blue riband of the Turf when he won the Derby with Sir Bevys in 1879 in the name of Mr. Acton. The name



SANTA FINA.

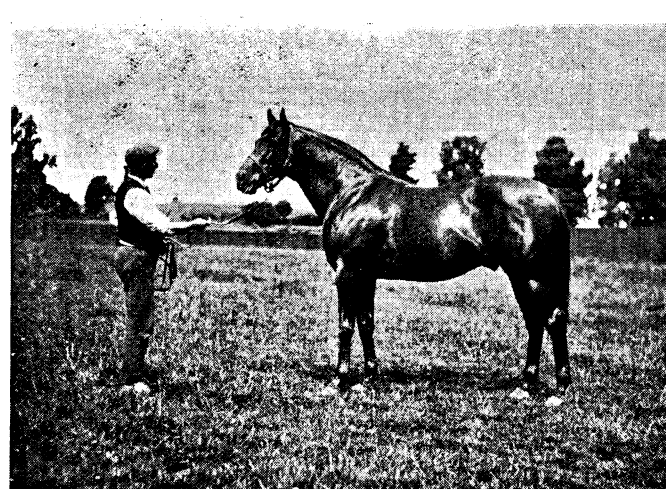
A famous brood mare belonging to Mr. Anthony de Rothschild. The dam of Galloper Light.

was assumed out of compliment to his London estate, Gunnersbury Park, at Acton, now a public pleasure ground.

At Gunnersbury, at Tring Park, and at his superb house at 148 Piccadilly, Baron Lionel and the Baroness entertained on a magnificent scale. The Baron was a great figure in Society and intimate with some of the foremost statesmen of the day. Among them was Benjamin Disraeli, with whom the Baron was acquainted both in his early literary life and in his later days in Parliament. Baron Lionel is supposed to have been the prototype of Sidonia in Disraeli's novel of "Coningsby." Disraeli and Baron Lionel will always be remembered as being associated in one great national event, the purchase of the Suez Canal Shares in 1875. When Disraeli (he was not yet the Earl of Beaconsfield) arranged this wonderful diplomatic deal for the British Empire, Baron Lionel advanced to the English Government four million pounds for the purchase of the Khedive's shares.

The firm later on did immense service to Egypt by saving it from bankruptcy, making advances without security at a moment when, Great Britain excepted, the Great Powers were merely looking on and disputing as to their rights in that country. The invaluable services rendered by Messrs. N. M. Rothschild & Sons were acknowledged in Parliament by Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the then Chancellor of the Exchequer, in these words :—" The late Prime Minister has stated that Egypt was in imminent danger of bankruptcy. In fact, it was saved only by monthly advances made by Messrs. Rothschild upon no legal security, but simply on the security of a private note from the late Foreign Secretary. The greatest dangers might have occurred if the issue of the loan had been any longer delayed." This is only one of many cases of great confidential transactions between the British Government and the Rothschilds in times of national stress. The " late Prime Minister " referred to by " Black Michael," as the famous Chancellor was known, was Mr. Gladstone.

Another great financial transaction affecting the welfare of nations with which the Rothschilds were concerned, was at the conclusion of the Franco-German War in 1871, when Baron Lionel supported the main-



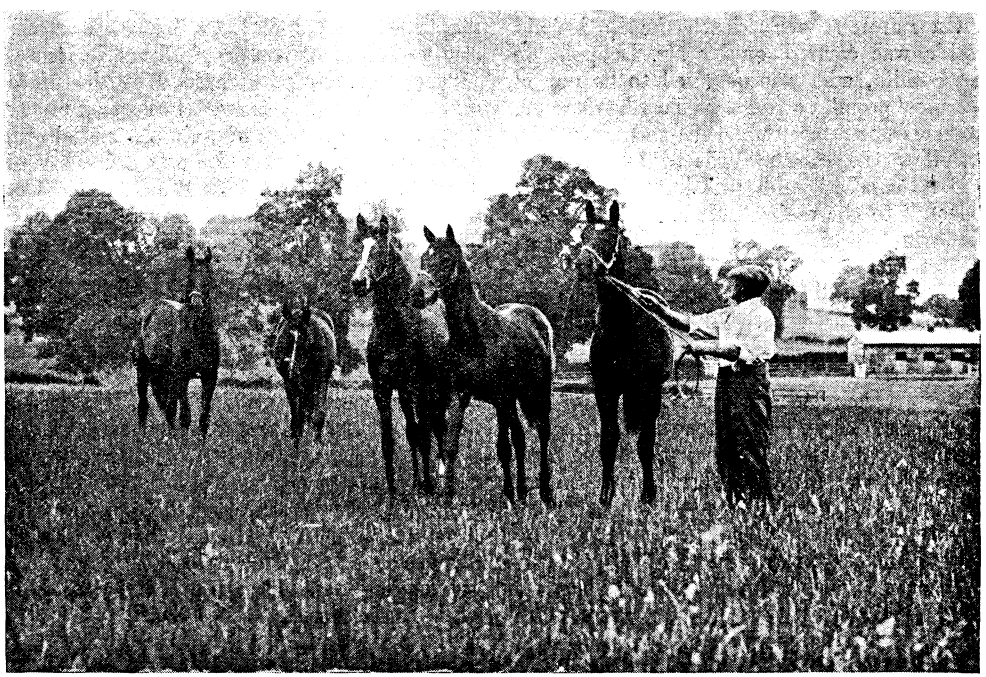
GALLOPER LIGHT.

Winner of the Grand Prix, 1919, for Mr. Anthony de Rothschild. Since that date it has been the sire of many famous winners.

tenance of the foreign exchanges and in this manner did immense service to the French nation by facilitating the payment of the French indemnity to the Germans.

Baron Lionel's brother, Baron Mayer de Rothschild, will be remembered as one of the outstanding Turf figures of his time. He built the magnificent mansion of Mentmore on land which formerly belonged to the Duke of Buckingham, and in the neighbouring hamlet of Crabton set up a stud farm, which bred some of the most famous horses in Turf history. Probably no racing colours are better known in this country than the famous "blue and yellow." His Turf successes were so many and extraordinary that "Follow the Baron" became in time the slogan of the racing public, but it was never put to such account as in 1871, when the Baron won the Derby with Favonius, and the One Thousand Guineas, the Oaks and the St. Leger with Hannah, named after his daughter, who was subsequently the Countess of Rosebery. Had he won the Two Thousand Guineas, Baron Mayer would have carried off the five great Classic races in one year—an unprecedented record. He also won the Cesarewitch the same year with Corisande.

Although the Rothschild stud, which in the words of that great racing authority, the late Duke of Beaufort, was world-famous, its origin was as romantic as anything in Turf history. One day at New Court, in the year 1842, the partners got up a lottery for a valuable emerald, which Baron Mayer won. He resold the gem to the jeweller, the original owner, and with the money bought a mare named Emerald. She ran well in the Oaks, but at the stud she laid the foundation of the fortunes of the Rothschild stable, for she gave birth to Mentmore Lass, who was the dam of the famous Favonius and Hannah. Another chance mare of the Baron's which made Turf history, was the daughter of Evening Star, a throw-out from the Marquis of Westminster's stable. She was sold to Baron Mayer by Mr. Oldaker, then a famous saddler. She became known as the equine goddaughter of Benjamin Disraeli from this interesting circumstance. The filly won a race at Egham, when she was unnamed, and "Dizzy," who was staying with the Rothschilds at Gunnersbury at the time, was asked by the Baron to bestow a name upon her. He called her "Daughter of the Star," and she after-



[*Sport and General.*

THOROUGHBRED YEARLING FILLIES

at Mr. Anthony de Rothschild's Southcourt stud, Leighton Buzzard.

wards bred such equine giants as Hippolyta and Hippia.

Baron Mayer's elder brother, Sir Anthony, did not take kindly to racing—hunting was his sport. Sir Thomas Fowell Buxton in his *Memoirs* in 1834 writes: "The second son (Anthony) is a mighty hunter; and his father lets him buy any horses he likes. He lately applied to the Emperor of Morocco for a first-rate Arab horse. The Emperor sent him a magnificent one, but he died as he landed in England. The poor youth said very feelingly, 'that was the greatest misfortune I have ever suffered'; and I felt strong sympathy with him."

On Baron Mayer's death the Rothschild stable was carried on by Mr. Leopold de Rothschild, who was destined to be one of the most popular owners the Turf has known. His successes were numerous and the slogan "Follow the Baron" was also applied to "Mr. Leopold," who was known as "The Baron" to the racing public. He achieved the height of his ambition when he won the Derby with St. Amant in 1904. The race was run in a drenching storm, but so delighted was "Mr. Leopold" that he rushed down from the members' enclosure to lead in the winner, drenched to the skin and minus his immaculate silk hat, which he lost in the scrimmage. The plaudits of the great crowd for a victory for the "Blue and Yellow" were deafening, and a well-known racing writer at the time said that such popularity could only have been exceeded by one other owner on the Turf, viz. King Edward. Both Mr. Leopold and his brother Lord Rothschild were keen supporters of hunting, and they carried on the traditions of the Rothschild staghounds by being Masters of the Hounds for many years.

To revert from the Turf to finance, the three sons of Baron Lionel, namely Lord Rothschild, Mr. Alfred de Rothschild and Mr. Leopold de Rothschild, were regular habitués of New Court, and in their private life were devoted to each other. Lord Rothschild, who was the first Jewish Peer, was one of the most remarkable men of his time and prominent in all matters of national importance. The three brothers were great friends of King Edward, a friendship begun in their Cambridge days, when the Rothschilds and the then Prince of Wales were undergraduates of Trinity College. Lord Rothschild was the leader of philanthropic effort in this country, and under his organisation one of the principal departments at New Court was devoted exclusively to charitable purposes. He married Emma, daughter of Baron Karl Rothschild, of Frankfort. Lady Rothschild, who now resides at 148 Piccadilly, was well known as one of the greatest hostesses in Society.

"Mr. Alfred" was famous as a patron of the arts and the theatre, and many struggling artists, musicians and actors owed their success to his benevolence. It is a melancholy coincidence that the three brothers died within less than three years of each other soon after the outbreak of the Great War.

The present Lord Rothschild is not connected with the firm. An ardent hunting man, he also devotes a great deal of time to the study of Natural History, and his Zoological Museum at Tring is regarded as the finest and most complete private Collection in the world. His interest in animals was shown a few years ago when he drove a team of zebras in London and in Bucks. He is of simple and modest tastes, very retiring, and is extremely popular with all who come in contact with him.

One celebrated Rothschild in England who was not a member of the firm of N. M. Rothschild & Sons was Baron Ferdinand, who died about thirty years ago. In 1865 he married his cousin Evelina, sister of the first Lord Rothschild, but she died in the following year. In her memory Baron Ferdinand built the Evelina Hospital for Sick Children in Southwark. He was a man of varied and cultured tastes, but preferred, like others of his family, the life of a country gentleman—hunting and yachting being his principal sports. He was elected M.P. for Aylesbury in 1885, when Lord Rothschild, who represented the constituency, was made a Peer, and he continued to sit in the House of Commons until his death in 1898, when he was succeeded by his cousin the Hon. Walter Rothschild, now Lord Rothschild. His magnificent country house at Waddesdon Manor, Bucks, was a veritable museum of art. He had the distinction of having as his guests Queen Victoria and King Edward. The Emperor Frederick of Germany and the Shah of Persia were also among the many potentates whom Baron "Ferdie," as he was affectionately known, entertained at Waddesdon. He figured prominently as a leader of Society, and Waddesdon Manor was the scene of many brilliant functions. He bequeathed his magnificent collection of art treasures to the British Museum (of which he was a Trustee) on the condition that it was kept in a separate room from the other

collections and called the Waddesdon Bequest Room.

The present rulers at New Court are Mr. Lionel and Mr. Anthony de Rothschild, the sons of Mr. Leopold, who carry on the great family traditions. Mr. Lionel, who is the head of the firm, for many years took an interest in politics and sat as Conservative Member for Aylesbury from 1910 to 1923, when he succeeded his cousin, the Hon. Walter Rothschild, now Lord Rothschild. Aylesbury had consequently returned four members of the House of Rothschild as representatives to Parliament for an unbroken period of 58 years, namely, Sir Nathaniel 1865–85, Baron Ferdinand 1885–98, and the Hon. Walter Rothschild 1898–1910. Mr. Lionel's principal amusements are yachting (he is a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron) and gardening. He has taken an active share in promoting a love for horticulture among the public at large. Mr. Anthony carries on the famous Rothschild Stable at Palace House, Newmarket, and although he has not yet been fortunate enough to achieve the successes of his father and his grand-uncle, he has already had the distinction of leading in the winner of one of the first Classic races, namely, the One Thousand Guineas, which he won in 1927. He also won the Grand Prix with Galloper Light in 1919. He is a member of the Jockey Club and also of the Turf Club.

If the Rothschild Stable in its early days achieved great success through the chance purchases of throw-outs from other stables, it certainly met its Nemesis when a horse which was given away as being useless for racing purposes, won the Grand National, which next to the Derby is the greatest race on the Turf. This was Double Chance, which Mr. Anthony presented to Mr. Fred Archer, the Newmarket trainer, whose tragic death occurred so recently as last October. Mr. Archer trained Double Chance as a hunter, and having won some steeplechases with him entered him in the Grand National, which he won in 1925. The jockey, Major J. P. Wilson, the well-known amateur, had never been over the course before. Archer was naturally overjoyed at winning this great race, but his pleasure was principally derived from the fact that Double Chance was presented to him by his old troop leader Major Anthony de Rothschild. Archer served under him in the Royal Bucks Hussars as Lieutenant, and they saw some very severe fighting together in Gallipoli.

Apart from their great responsibilities at New Court, both brothers take the deepest interest in matters of national importance, and in the cause of charity the name of Rothschild is as prominent as ever. Outside the firm's premises in New Court there is suspended a banker's sign, such as one sees in Lombard Street. That in St. Swithin's Lane, illustrated on another page, is the Red Shield, with five arrows, and the inscription, "Concordia Industria Integrita," a motto the family have always faithfully lived up to. Benjamin Disraeli must have had this tradition in mind when in attending the wedding of Leonora de Rothschild to Baron Alphonse de Rothschild of Paris in 1857 he said:—"Under this roof are the heads of the name and family of Rothschild—a name famous in every capital and every division of the globe—a family not more regarded for its riches than esteemed for its honour, virtues, integrity and public spirit."

ALMOND TREE.

TOO small for a bird's frail nest,
Why do I love you best ?
Almond tree, almond tree.
Too young to shelter me
From the kiss of the golden sun,
From the silver rain.
And yet the young heart leaps
To find you here again.
And the frail old heart is glad
To know at last,
The kiss of your sunset bloom
With the snows of winter past.
And sorrow lost in their drifts.
First of the year's good gifts,
You hold its wealth for me,
Almond tree, almond tree.

MARJORIE D. TURNER.



HOW TO BE HAPPY THOUGH MARRIED.

FIRST TRAVELLER: Marriage should be an affair of give and take. I've been married thirty years and have never had a quarrel with my wife.

SECOND TRAVELLER: Well, I don't know how you manage it!

FIRST TRAVELLER: It's quite easy—one day I let her do as she likes, and the next day she lets me do as she likes.

GAMBLER'S HOPE

By J. J. Bell

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," etc.

"In yonder well lies treasure, ancient, rare,
Rich gems,—a woman's hope, a man's despair."
ANON.

SYNOPSIS OF EARLIER CHAPTERS.

The story, set in three generations, begins in a London hotel, where Flora Ballantyre, a Highland girl recently married, is called upon to "mother" a wee Spanish boy whose "madre" has just died and whose father is in the wilds of South America.

Nearly a quarter of a century passes. Flora, now Lady Ballantyre, and seven years a widow, has come to Spain to seek help from Luis de Lara, now a man of thirty, because she has been gambling and is in serious financial difficulties.

Secretly ashamed and abashed, she is aware that with advancing years Luis's childish adoration has taken a warmer form. Scarcely a dozen years separate them. Was there—could there be—any sort of response in her heart?

She is hoping that her son, Steve, whose money she has also risked, will become engaged to Winifred Charters, who has £80,000 of her own. But during a yachting cruise in Scottish waters Steve has become attached to Ailsa Maclean, a kinswoman. Steve is arranging another cruise in the *Miranda* during August, and Luis, after some persuasion, agrees to join them at Tobermory, partly as a distraction from secret remorse (he has unintentionally killed a Spaniard during a brawl), partly because he is interested in a story of a Spanish dagger and a scrap of parchment possessed by Ailsa's father, Hector Maclean, attached to which is a legend of buried treasure to which his own father's papers make reference.

Faced with further depressions in "Flossies," Lady Ballantyre makes full confession to Luis and he at once arranges to sell pictures and other heirlooms and place the money to her account. These proceedings arouse the suspicions of his rascally deaf and dumb Spanish secretary, Gaspar Muñez, especially when Gaspar finds that Luis has discovered a fragment of bloodstained parchment relating to the treasure buried centuries ago at Tobermory. Luis's first hope is that he may have the privilege, as a good Catholic, of restoring the jewels to the Church, to which they rightfully belong. Lady Ballantyre, however, sees in a successful search the possibility of restoring her fortunes. It is a "Gambler's Hope," and Luis, from his great love for her, eventually compromises with conscience. Meanwhile preparations for the visit to Tobermory go forward, carefully watched by the scheming secretary.

VII.

BRITAIN is a small island, but there are many Britons to whom Tobermory is merely an absurd name in a not particularly comic song. There are others who, while disposed to credit its geographical existence, assume it to be a sort of Ultima Thule. Whether the name itself is more absurd than, say, Strathbungo, or Llandudno, or Piccadilly—it means the Well of Mary—is one of those reasonable questions which cannot be reasonably answered; but, if we may believe the time-tables, Tobermory is within sixteen hours of London, and less than three hours from Oban.

There are people, too, methodical readers of their newspapers, who for a good many years have associated Tobermory with the activities of an indefatigable military officer and his divers and the Spanish treasure somewhere under the waters of the Bay. And if Tobermory is not printed on an ordinary map of the world, it is an important spot on that of its own grand Island of Mull, and one notable in Argyll.

Most of us are so constituted that on approaching for the first time an inhabited place we honour with our gaze the work of man, however mean, before that of nature, however noble. Hence the prospect of

Tobermory, as we sail into its secure yet spacious haven, does not impress, and may even, on a wet day, depress us; though should the steamer have left a winter gale outside, the first view may appear welcome enough. But not its most perfervid son, returning from a far country, would apply the word "lovely," even in the sunshine, to yonder uneven row of shops with dwelling-houses above, interspersed with three hostelries, two churches, a couple of banks, a recreation-hall and a post office, all bounded on the left by a distillery, and on the right, perched on the cliff, by a big hotel, vacant, long since abandoned as an unpayable venture.

All that, however, is only a blemish, not a blight, on the Tobermory that peeps charmingly from the steep sylvan slope. On either side the green descends to the waters of the Bay, bordered at low tide by bands of brown seaweed; while above and beyond rise up the mighty mountains of Mull. It is only that man, as is his way, has made a small mess in the midst of boundless beauty; and since the douce, kindly folk of Tobermory, every day of their lives, look out upon beauty, there is no reason why they should sadly reflect that man, had he taken thought a century and a half ago, might have built on that crescent of shore the prettiest little town in all Scotland.

So sheltered is the Bay by the long, low rocky isle of Calve, that its waters may rest almost unruffled, while overhead the scud is racing, and out yonder the Sound, glimpsed through the narrow channel, is raging white under the lash of squalls swooping down from the mountains of Morven, or of a gale roaring in from the open. It would seem as though the normal quietude of the Bay were reflected on the spirit of the town. In the forenoon it may chance that the stranger walks from one end to the other and meets no living creature save, perhaps, a Cairn terrier or two, who in their desire for distraction will most engagingly invite him to throw stones. Doubtless the people are doing their work, attending to their business, having their thrills and troubles, like other people; but outwardly Tobermory is a place of peace, where "time comes dropping slow."

On the morning of the second day of August there was a great calm, not only on the Bay, but on the seas beyond. Not long ago the swift steamer from Oban had made her daily call at the pier under the abandoned hotel, landed the mails and a few passengers, and continued her trip to Staffa and Iona. As her scarlet funnels passed out of sight beyond the promontory the stir in the town and the trouble of the waters had alike subsided. Motionless at their anchorages lay a steam trawler with a yellow funnel, three drifters with black ones, a couple of small sailing yachts, a white motor-launch, and a dingy barge. The only noticeable sound, a leisurely clanking, came from the barge, from the deck of which, a while ago, a woman diver had gone down once more in quest of that elusive Spanish treasure.

Over all the world, as it seemed to one looking out from Tobermory, hung a vapour, veiling the islet, hiding the mountains, yet of such tenuity overhead that sunshine was filtered through it upon the nearer waters.

On the hillside, eighty feet above the shore, half a mile from the town, on the road to Aros, but with its back to the road, stood the house of Hector Maclean. Sailing into the Bay, we might fail to notice it among the trees, but from its garden, set on a shelf levelled by nature above an abrupt fall in the rock, the eye had a wide range. Originally a cottage of two storeys, it had recently received the addition of wings; its former living-rooms had been thrown together to form a lounge-hall panelled in oak, which was entered from the garden through a glazed porch with double doors. The new living-rooms were in the wings, a comfortable enough dining-room on the left, and on the right a parlour somewhat crowded with old-fashioned mahogany, and thus far scarcely used. With a little encouragement from his daughter, Maclean would have made of it a conventional drawing-room.

At the back of the hall was a door shutting off the domestic premises, and the old narrow staircase ran steeply up to the bedrooms. The staircase, the wood of which had been burned and scraped and oak-stained, and some quaint colour prints of shipping on the walls were the only furnishings not new. The oak floor was partially covered with bright Indian rugs, the half-dozen easy-chairs and couch were dressed in gay chintz, and the fireplace was built of unglazed brick. On the left stood a half-size billiard-table, on the right, in the corner beyond the fireplace, a baby-grand piano in black walnut, which the purchaser had chosen less for its beauty than for the increasing scarcity of the wood.

There were persons in Tobermory who—especially when the baby-grand arrived—

had expressed the opinion that Hector Maclean was "going his mile," in other words, flying a bit too high; but none who knew the man could have doubted that all had been done—mainly during her absence—for his daughter. Maclean had been a widower for ten years; his two elder sons had died in the Great War, his two younger, soon after its ending, had gone to Canada. He had only Ailsa left. He had grudged her nothing in the way of education, which meant her absence from him, worrying all the time lest at the end of it she should regard Tobermory as a place of confinement; and when the long visit to her brother in Canada was being planned, he had vowed to himself that she should come back to a home to which she could invite her finest of friends without risk of incurring their pity.

On her return Ailsa, being an honest girl, had been, at first, embarrassed, for she had friends of all sorts, to some of whom the lounge-hall and its contents might appear pretentious; yet she had never loved her father better than when he bade her try the piano, and then turned away to the window to hide, as she guessed, his tears of affection and pride. And she had soon got used to the new things, and within a week was keen on billiards and instructing her father in the game. If his happiness in giving was greater than hers in receiving, he was never allowed to suspect it. In his moments of high satisfaction he would wave his hand in lordly fashion and say: "If there is anything else you would be fancying, Ailsa, mind you, I can very well afford it."

Though no longer a general merchant in the active sense, he was still partner in his old business with his young kinsman, Ronald Maclean, and he still dealt, on his own account, in a number of things, ranging in variety from motor-cars to life assurance, thereby giving himself occupation profitable enough to be enjoyable. His office was situated behind the left wing of the house. Ordinary clients entered it by a back door; the more distinguished were conducted to it through hall and dining-room.

On this morning he came from his office by the latter way and, halting in the hall, shouted up the staircase:

"Ailsa—quick! Here is a wire from Flora Ballantyre."

"What does it say?"

"No; come you down, and I will tell you."

Smiling to himself, as one awaiting his beloved, he stood there, a fine sturdy figure of a man, despite his sixty years, with shaggy grey hair, short beard, deep-set blue-grey eyes, kindly yet shrewd, looking out from a bronzed countenance, under bushy brows.

Presently he re-read the telegram, remarking to himself that Flora Ballantyre was not the one to count the pennies. The remark was not unjustified.

> "On board yacht 'Miranda' at Oban. Arrived last night and are leaving at one to-day for Tobermory. Hope you and Ailsa may be able to join us on a cruise. We have only two guests on board at present, Luis de Lara, of whom you have heard, and Steve's great friend, Winifred Charters. In any case we shall expect you to dine on board to-night. We shall all come up to your house on arrival. What lovely weather.—FLORA BALLANTYRE."

He was engaged in reckoning the number of useless words when his daughter came downstairs. Ailsa Maclean was of medium height, but a certain pride of poise made her seem tall. Her straightness was not that which sometimes suggests meagre development. Her face was rounded, yet not broad, the nose a trifle tilted, the mouth tenderly shaped and ready to smile, the chin firm, but delicately finished. Her eyes were her father's, very clear, though not cold, and she wore her tawny hair bobbed in the fashion of a few years ago, because she thought it suited her so. She would have been pale but for the tan of wind and sea. She was dressed as any girl in her place might have been dressed at that hour—fawn skirt and Fair Isle jumper, fawn shoes and white stockings.

"Well, and what is this very important wire about?" Her speech had all the softness of the West Highlands, though she managed her labials correctly—or nearly so. She did not actually say "fery" or "apout." "Is she not coming to-day?"

He handed her the telegram, remarking, "How your aunt keeps wealthy when she spends seven shillings on what she could have sent on a postcard the night before, God knows, for I do not!"

"She is not my aunt—how often must I be telling you that, Daddy?" said Ailsa, beginning to read.

"Well, she wanted you to be calling her your aunt last year, and I am sure young Stephen thinks you are his cousin, or he would not have been writing to you so often." He laughed.

His daughter did not respond. Had he been watching more keenly he might have noted the shadowing of the eyes, the meeting of the lips at the words, "Steve's great friend, Winifred Charters."

"They should be here about four," she said, handing back the telegram. "If the sun breaks through, we can have tea in the garden."

"A very good notion, Ailsa!" He would have said the same had she proposed tea in the hall. Ailsa's notions were always very good. "But it is queer," he went on, "to think of Flora having only two visitors on that great, big vessel. Maybe she is trying to economise a little, after all. It would be a God's blessing if she learned to be more careful. Your aunt is a very clever woman, Ailsa, but——"

"Lady Ballantyre says she has only two guests—at present. Very likely she will be having more later on."

"Very likely, very likely, indeed! You are the one to think of things! Well, well, it is her own affair. And now, before you get busy about the tea, you had best be packing your frocks and things for the cruise, so as to be ready in good time. Flora will have to excuse me, for I cannot leave my business just now."

"Lady Ballantyre will have to excuse me, too, for I do not wish to go."

"What? But that is nonsense, Ailsa! You enjoyed the cruise last year, and you will be glad to see your cousin again, and——"

"Steve Ballantyre is not my cousin, and I have quite made up my mind about the cruise. I suppose we must dine on the yacht," she continued, after a moment's pause, "so I will be airing your dress-suit—and oh, Daddy, why will you not get a new one? It might have come out of the Ark, after being taken on board by mistake!"

"It is a very good dress-suit, Ailsa. It is not every dress-suit that would be so smart after twenty-seven years."

"I—I don't believe you can afford a new one!"

"What! By—— I will show you! To-morrow morning I will take the *Lochinvar* to Oban——" He caught her eye, burst out laughing, became sober, and cried: "You mischief! But do not you be thinking I cannot afford it! I can afford anything that will please you."

"Then you will see about a new one—not to-morrow, but soon—otherwise people will be thinking you have spent all your money on me, and cannot afford——"

"What do I heed what people will be thinking? . . . But, Ailsa, my lass, why will you not take the cruise when your—my cousin—asks you?"

"Just because I do not wish to take it, thank you." She glanced over her shoulder. "And here is Ronald coming to see you about some business. Good morning, Ronald," she said graciously to the young man in the dining-room doorway, and walked out and into the porch, thence to the garden.

"What is it, Ronald?" Maclean's tone to his acting partner suggested irritation. He was puzzled by his daughter's manner, and not satisfied that she was really concerned about the old dress-suit.

"It is this letter, Mr. Maclean," replied the splendidly built young man, with the dark handsome features and rather melancholy eyes, who was dressed more like a sailor than a merchant. "I thought you should be seeing it at once, in case you might be wishing to wire. But I am sorry if I disturbed you and Miss Ailsa."

"You did quite right," said the older man, returning the letter, one of a few lines. "By wiring at once we will save a little money."

"I will attend to it. There are some other things, but, I suppose, you will be coming down in the afternoon?"

"Yes, I will be—but no!—I forgot. If there is anything urgent you must bring it here. My cousin, Lady Ballantyre, is coming in her yacht with her son—you remember them last year—and some friends, and they will be spending the afternoon here, and in the evening Ailsa and I will be taking dinner on board." He paused for a moment. "Ailsa has been invited to take a cruise on the yacht, but she says she will not go, and I do not understand it, for she enjoyed it so much last year. Maybe she thinks I will not like to be left alone, but that is nonsense. You might go out by the garden, Ronald, and, if you see her, and if she speaks about it, you might advise her to take the cruise. It is people like my cousin that she should be knowing nowadays. And now I must be getting back to the office. Do what you can, my lad."

"I will do as you wish," answered the young man, with a sombre look, "but it will be a great astonishment to me if Miss Ailsa listens to any advice of mine."

Maclean turned quickly. "Why do you speak so? You are her old friend, one of her oldest friends. It was you who made her



"'But, Ailsa, my lass, why will you not take the cruise when your—my cousin—asks you?'"

not afraid of the sea, taught her to sail a boat, manage a motor . . . What is the matter? Have you and Ailsa cast out?"

On Ronald's face the bronze deepened. "It is maybe not the time to be saying it, Mr. Maclean, but——" He halted.

"Speak out, man! What have you two quarrelled about? For a while now I have had a notion that Ailsa and you——"

"We have not quarrelled. Please God, we will never do that. But I will tell you the truth, Mr. Maclean—and the truth is that I am very glad she is not wanting to take the cruise."

"You are very glad? Now why the devil do you say that?"

"Because, since last summer, I have been fearing that Miss Ailsa was caring for her English cousin——"

"Young Stephen is not her cousin! I am not for any foolishness between cousins—by Goodness, no! But why have you been thinking such a thing? I have noticed nothing!"

"I cannot tell exactly what I have been thinking," Ronald replied, "but I will tell you the rest of the truth. Till last summer I was not fearing. Maybe I was hoping." He lifted up his big work and weather-roughened hands and let them fall. "Oh, the whole truth, Mr. Maclean, will just be that I have been loving your daughter ever since she was a little wee thing at the school; and if you are offended—well, I cannot help it. If you think that I, who was till lately your servant, and who am still only your serving partner, am behaving like an upstart, I cannot help it, either. Other men might be giving her more of the things of the world, but no man could love her better. . . . Well, it had to come out sooner or later, and now you have it all."

During the little speech Hector Maclean's expression of perplexity had softened into that of distress.

"I am not offended, Ronald, and I would be a hypocrite if I was saying that I had never thought of such a thing," he said kindly. "You have always been the good lad to me, yes, since the first day you ran with my messages; and since you came back—alone—from the War you have been more than just a kinsman to me. Offended? No, no! Between you and me there will never be offence. And I do not forget that when you might have gone abroad with my boys, and maybe done better for yourself out yonder, you were loyal to me and stopped in Tobermory. . . . But all that can make no difference in this case, Ronald. I cannot give you Ailsa. Only Ailsa can give herself."

"Then you would not be forbidding it? You do not say I must not try?"

"No, I do not say that. . . . But I would not be lifting my little finger to help you."

"Will you be wishing me good luck, Mr. Maclean?"

"Nor that!"

"I—I do not understand you."

"If Ailsa was giving herself to you, Ronald, I would give you my hand on it and be glad for you both."

"But you would sooner she gave herself to another man?"

"I am not saying it." Hector Maclean threw out his arms in a gesture of exasperation. "I will be open with you," he said. "Ever since Ailsa came home from the school for the last time, I have been a troubled man. My mind has been torn in pieces with wondering if she was content, if she would be long content, to bide in Tobermory; for I am not such an old fool as to think that Tobermory is the only place in the world for a bright young lass. And I have been selfish enough to wish her in Tobermory as long as I am in it——"

"If she would give herself to me——"

"Yes, yes! But, you see, there are other thoughts tearing at my mind. I have my ambitions for Ailsa. You, Ronald,"—kindly—"are not the only man in Tobermory that has looked at her; and there have been others on the Mainland, and in the South, yes, and in Canada. I have had dreams of her marrying a man who would make a great name, as well as a good fortune, to her honour; and in my dreams I have been very well content to see her sailing away from Mull and myself. You see, I am not so selfish—in my dreams! . . . But still, still, I do not know what I would choose for Ailsa; I do not know, because I cannot tell what would make her happy—and keep her happy. . . . And what more can I say to you, Ronald, my lad?" For a moment he rested his hand on the young man's shoulder, then turned and went slowly towards his office.

After a while, Ronald, squaring his shoulders, moved into the porch.

Ailsa was still in the garden, standing by the low wall that guarded a rocky, shrubby gulf, for here it was that the ground fell away abruptly and then, some forty feet

below, sloped steeply, hidden by trees, to the shore. To her right and left the garden was closed in and protected by trees; but before her was a clear space giving a view of the Bay, the Isle of Calve, the Sound, and the mountains of Morven. It was a favoured spot of hers—not that she sought it always in happiest mood. With her healthy young body and naturally cheerful nature, she was not often depressed, but since the return from Canada there had been days when she had gazed rather wistfully into the open, the outer world, as one looking forth from a prison.

She was not depressed now—certainly not! She was only annoyed with herself for having been angry with those words in Lady Ballantyre's telegram, "Steve's great friend, Winifred Charters." It was so absurd, so silly, to have been angry with words that meant to her nothing—nothing more than their face meaning. She hardly knew Steve Ballantyre; at least, she did not know him well; not very well, anyway. It was a whole year since she had seen him; she doubted whether she would know him if he walked into the garden now. On the yacht, last year, apart from mere moments of polite remarks, she had talked with him only five or six times—well, it might have been seven or eight; and his letters afterwards had been just ordinary, friendly letters, about nothing in particular, quite interesting in their way; otherwise, of course, she would not have troubled to answer them. As for this Miss Winifred Chatters, or whatever her name, she was, doubtless, one of those Eton-cropped, yellow-haired, skinny girls in hideous sports stockings, who talked of nothing but golf and powdered their noses every five minutes—and she was probably going to get engaged to Steve on the *Miranda*! Well, what if she did? Such an event would excite no one in Tobermory, least of all Miss Ailsa Maclean. Ridiculous to give it a thought. Foolish to be angry. No wonder she was annoyed with herself for having been angry with the words in the telegram—which words, by the way, had cost Lady Ballantyre several extra thoughts as well as extra pence.

Ronald, crossing the lawn, was near before she was aware. She turned sharply and—smiled; and it seemed to Ronald that this was the smile he had been waiting for half his life.

"Has father gone back to his office?" she inquired.

"Yes; and it is time I was going back to mine. Only——"

"Sit down, Ronald," she said, seating herself on the bench at the wall, "and smoke one of your very bad cigarettes. You work too hard down there."

"I can never work too hard," he replied, wishing she had started the conversation in her native tongue; he could have said his say better in the Gaelic. "And"—with a grave smile—"I can never be smoking too bad cigarettes."

"If you do not take care—or less care—you will grow into a miser."

"I am a miser now, Miss Ailsa, but maybe I could reform——"

"Misers never reform." She shook her bobbed head. "They only get worse and worse."

"Yes, when they are left to themselves, Miss Ailsa."

There was a pause till she said: "I have been wondering why you have been calling me 'Miss Ailsa' ever since I came home from Canada."

"I could not be calling you anything else. You came home different. You had changed much in the ten months you were away. I cannot tell what the changes were. It was not what I saw, but what I felt."

"Maybe," she said meditatively, "seeing the world makes one a little different, but I am sure I have not changed my feelings for anybody in Tobermory. There is no reason whatever for you to be calling me 'Miss'—you that carried me through the water to your boat when I was a little wee girl." Without giving him time to respond, she added: "But I have been wondering if the change father made in the old house had not something to do with it."

"That, too, maybe," he said quickly, "for I must be saying that the new hall, when I saw it first, made me a little afraid of your father—and you."

"How could you be so stupid? So that is why, never since we came home, have you come in the evenings, as you used to do!"

"In the evenings, most of them, I am looking after the books of the business."

"What nonsense! A great, strong man like you! Why, Ronald, you should be out in the Sound, racing your wonderful motor-boat, or up in the hills with your rod, or gun—or visiting your best friends! The books of the business! You will not keep your health if you take no exercise but adding up figures!"

"For a head like mine," said Ronald, with a glint of humour, "it is very good exercise indeed, and my arms are as strong as ever they were."

"No, no! You should have a clerk. I will speak to father about it."

"He has often offered me a clerk. Maybe I will be asking for one—some day."

"You are foolish to waste yourself like this. When will you come up and take a cue at the billiards?"

"I would not be knowing what to do with a cue—Ailsa."

"Will you not ask me to give you lessons? Father is getting quite fond of it."

"I will take anything you will give me." His gaze was on the distant hills. Rather abruptly he said, "Is it true that you are home, in Tobermory, for good?"

"I—suppose so."

Her answer chilled him, but presently he said, "Your father was telling me that Lady Ballantyre is due on her yacht this afternoon, and she wishes you to take a cruise with her——"

"I am not going."

He appeared to be studying the upper mist, through which the sun was breaking. "I think there is going to be some fine weather," he remarked, "and a cruise to the Outer Isles, or, maybe, up to Gairloch and round Skye, would be a great pleasure, especially on a grand steam-yacht, with good company."

"I have told you, I am not going."

"Your father thinks you are not going for his sake; you are afraid he will be lonely in the evenings. But just say the word, and I will play the billiards with him every night."

She smiled in spite of herself. "Thank you, Ronald. It was a kind thought. But my reason for not going is just that I do not wish to go."

He drew in his breath. "Ailsa," he said, "Ailsa, I am very glad to hear you say that!"

Puzzled by his manner, she looked at him—and was suddenly afraid.

"And, Ailsa," he went on, the tan of his face greyish, "I would be very glad—God knows how glad—if you would wish never to go away from Tobermory and your father and—me. For"—he slipped into the Gaelic—"I have dearly loved you ever since you were a little wee thing, Ailsa, and I will dearly love you till the last breath goes out of me." His great hands went out in appeal, trembling.

Her eyes were piteous. She made a fluttering gesture of dismay, forbiddance.

"Ailsa, dear——"

"Oh, my good friend, why," she cried weakly, "has this come and spoiled everything?"

Only a few seconds, but to her it seemed a long time before he understood. His look was stupid, stunned.

"Ronald," she faltered, "I am so sorry."

The look passed. He got up, holding the back of the bench. Then he let go and straightened himself, squaring his shoulders. His smile, meant to be reassuring, was ghastly.

"You must not be sorry," he said quietly, "or you will kill me. I would kill anyone that made you sorry. Do not let it make any difference to yourself. I will tell your father I made a mistake. . . . But it is no great matter—no great matter." He laughed. "Well, well! I have never lit the bad cigarette you told me to smoke! See! I will light it now! . . . There! Now I will be getting about my business. So long, Ailsa . . . so long!"

He was gone from the garden before she lifted her head, and she looked up at a blurred world.

"Everything is going wrong," she said to herself. "I wish—I wish—oh, goodness knows what I wish!"

VIII.

By noon, when the *Miranda* left her anchorage in Oban Bay, the last tatters of mist had gone from the mountains and the sky was almost clear of cloud. So generous was the sun that the awning above the after-deck and the faint breeze were welcome to the little party.

Lady Ballantyre, Steve, and their guest, Miss Charters, had joined the yacht on the previous evening. Luis de Lara, fulfilling his jesting promise of three months ago, had come on board, after a night journey, in time for breakfast, though a rather late one. Since then Steve had so diligently performed his part of host that Luis and Lady Ballantyre had not found an opportunity for confidential talk, and it was beginning to look as though such an opportunity might not be given them during the short voyage. Yet it was vital, in Lady Ballantyre's view at least, that they should have a period of privacy before the *Miranda* reached Tobermory.

However, about one o'clock, in the Sound of Mull, Miss Charters expressed a wish to

go up on the bridge, which Steve, as her host also, could hardly ignore.

But now, with the removal of the need for discretion, Lady Ballantyre seemed to have difficulty in opening the necessary conversation. With a sigh suggesting weariness, she sat up in her lounge chair and pointed to an ancient castle set on a promontory. Her speech was oddly formal.

"That is Duart, Señor, the ancestral home of The Maclean. Tradition has it that it was the factor of a Maclean of Duart who blew up the treasure ship. Not so long ago that castle was an empty ruin; now it is restored and a home."

Luis, to whom the verb "restore" had a peculiar significance, smiled kindly. "Are you asking me to behold in that castle a good omen of what awaits us in Tobermory?" he said. "Restored fortunes—why not?"

She did not respond, and when at last she looked at him, he saw that her lip was quivering.

"Luis, you have been so good to me. When I think of all you have done for me in those three months—all that money——"

"Not that, if you please! That must never be mentioned. I should have been happier if you had not written to me about it. Your banker's acknowledgment was enough; it will be enough in future. Please!"

She shook her head. "I must hold my tongue, since you will have it so. I tried to tell you how I felt about your goodness—my gratitude, my shame—in my last letter——"

"Come, come!" His tone was tender. "See! The sun shines, and we are two gay adventurers—pirates, if you like!—on our way to——" He stopped short, a frown between his brows.

"What is it, Luis?"

"That letter—when did you post it?"

She told him.

"Ah, it was almost bound to miss me." The frown cleared. "By this time it has been forwarded to Tobermory, where I shall burn it unopened."

"No; I think I'd like you to read it. My poor better self wrote it, and it may be long before you hear from my better self again." With a shrug and a small laugh she appeared to dismiss her mood of sentiment. "Well, have you anything new to tell me—anything I ought to know before we get there? We must have a programme of some sort when we meet my cousin."

"That is so," he agreed, marvelling once more at her quick changes of look, manner and voice. "But I was leaving it all to you, Lady. I shall be truly a stranger in a strange land. You must instruct me. I dare say you have been thinking it out."

"Indeed, I have! Bring your chair nearer." She paused a moment. "I'm afraid—in fact, I know—you won't like it, but from the very outset you must aim to get yourself into the good books of my cousin and his daughter."

"Horrible!"

"It's necessary, Luis, and I'm sorry. Still, it won't be difficult. You have only to be yourself. Don't speak! I'm not paying compliments, but, the situation being what it is, your temptation would be to act a part, and, sooner or later, my cousin would see through you. In some ways Hector will strike you as very simple, but no Highlander is altogether stupid, or without guile. As for the girl, Ailsa, she will be jealously watching your ways with her father; she will be on the look out for insincerities, and will love or hate you accordingly."

"Why should there be insincerities? Your letters have told me a good deal about Mr. Maclean, and I am ready to like him."

"I'm not afraid of your not liking him, or of his not liking you—yourself. You will probably like Ailsa, too. I want you to like her."

Luis reached out and took a cigarette from the box on the handy table. "You are not, I hope," he said slowly, "asking me to make love to Miss Maclean?"

"I am not asking you to overdo anything; but your little attentions to her will please her father, and her good opinion of you will count with him."

There was an ash-tray on the arm of his chair, but Luis got up to drop the spent match overboard. Lady Ballantyre watched the act, but veiled her gaze when he came back to his seat.

"Lady," he said softly, "don't you know that you hurt me when you do not trust me fully? Why do not you frankly tell me that you wish me to kill two birds with the one stone? In other words, in paying my little attentions to Miss Maclean I shall be preventing Steve from paying his big ones. Is it not so?"

"It is so." She looked up defiantly. "But it is your own fault, Luis, that I ask so much of you. You have done so much for me. Still, I ask it."

"You don't seem to see the danger—or rather, the dangers?"

"I see very little else but dangers, anywhere, nowadays; but I have to take the risks. What dangers do you see in this particular direction?"

"First, that by taking the course you have asked me to take I might simply spur Steve into declaring himself to the girl."

"I shouldn't worry too much about that possibility," Lady Ballantyre said, thinking of her recent telegram. "You see, I do not flatter myself that Ailsa is already deeply in love with my boy, and when Ailsa sees Winifred, I think she will at least doubt whether Steve is really in love with herself. Poor Steve may, indeed, receive a cooler welcome than he is expecting. . . . And the other dangers?"

"There are two. Steve, whether suspecting a plot or not, might—and very pardonably, too—come to detest me; and, Lady, I do not desire to be detested by anybody, least of all by your son. Why, the day might come when you would detest me for his sake."

"Luis, don't be—don't exaggerate! Perhaps Steve may feel a certain resentment, but it will pass. He is not, I'm sorry to admit, a young man of—how shall I put it?—very permanent convictions; but, as the husband of Winifred, he will yet, I trust, be even grateful to you. . . . And the third awful danger?"

"The third awful danger," Luis replied, as he carefully dropped a little ash into the tray, "is that I might fall in love with Miss Maclean."

"You might," she returned, but not smartly, "do very much worse."

"And in all probability I shall," he said, smiling. "In the meantime," he went on, becoming serious, "you may count on my doing as you wish. I would ask only that you will try to trust me fully."

A slight glow dawned and died on the fair face. "If sometimes I seem to be keeping back things," she said, "please ask your questions, for I do want to trust you, Luis—fully."

"Then I will ask you a question now. Suppose that those jewels were in your hands, would you still desire to see Steve married to Miss Charters?"

"That always!" she exclaimed. "It is not the money only. Nor is it, since I've had time to think it out, the politics. Steve, for all I greatly care, is welcome to be a Socialist—so long as he is not a failure. But he will be a failure, no matter what his aim, if he is married to the wrong girl. I hate saying it, but Steve cannot make himself; only the right woman can make him—and she is Winifred Charters. Winifred is one of the born man-makers, and she wants a husband whom she can make. She has as good as told me so, also, being modern, that she is fond of Steve. And Steve was devoted to her till he met Ailsa Maclean. He still admires her, and but for the sentimental glamour of that cruise last year I believe that all would have been well to-day."

She paused, a little breathless, waiting for his reply.

He said nothing.

"Luis, do you think me a beast of a mother?"

He shook his head. "I have never doubted that you wanted Steve to be very—successful."

"You mean, I have not considered his happiness? Well, what is happiness?"

"Does the *Miranda* carry a dictionary?"

"Luis, that is surely the first cynical thing I have ever heard you say?"

"The truth will out! Forgive me, Lady. I certainly did not mean to imply that you have not considered Steve's happiness. I have known you both too long to imagine anything so absurd. Only, in my small worldly experience I have met few very successful men who suggested happiness, and quite a number of strugglers who did. Still"—with a little bow—"your knowledge of men and women is greater than mine. As a political hostess, if in no other capacity, you must have met a score of successes and hundreds of failures——"

"I seem to be forgetting those days," she put in, and sighed. "But, Luis, I cannot see why Winifred should not make Steve happy, as well as successful. She will be a wife to be proud of, with her beauty, cleverness and charm——"

"Pardon! Miss Charters has many charms, but not charm. Charms attract; charm holds, and its essence is naturalness. There is nothing quite natural about Miss Charters, who is, I willingly admit, a very perfect product of her age."

"Why do you dislike her so?"

"I do not dislike her, but I should not like to have to live with her."

"You are trying to make me uncomfortable about Steve!"

"Because I hate to think of you being uncomfortable, say, a year hence. Perhaps that is an impertinence. You are his

mother, and I ought not to question your wisdom."

"Oh, don't speak to me like that, Luis! Wisdom—great Heaven, what a word to apply to Flora Ballantyre!"

He laughed in spite of himself. "Perhaps I should have said 'common sense,' which is, on the whole, a trifle less deceiving to one's view of the future. . . . Forgive me, Lady. I am not really amused. And, anyway, I have given you my promise. . . . And, after all, it may be true, as I have heard said, that in Spain, where such things are arranged by the parents, there are fewer unhappy marriages than in England, where the children decide for themselves. In other words, perhaps, you are right."

"You are generous, as usual," she said. "But won't you go a step farther and admit that Steve does need a wife with a practical mind?"

"It sounds like a punishment; but the mind of Miss Charters as she has shown it to me—and she has done most of the talking this morning—appears not so practical as simply material, which is my chief ob——"

"Oh, I give it up!" cried Lady Ballantyre. "I suppose you would say that I, too, have a material mind."

The smile flickering on his lips was a little sad. "You may believe me, Lady, when I say that Miss Charters showed me more of her mind in the course of breakfast than you have shown me of yours in all the days I have known you."

"Luis, that is not true!"

He looked at his watch. "Time passes and we may be interrupted," he said in a business-like tone. "Tell me the part of your programme for going ashore. Shall we be spending the afternoon at your cousin's place, and do you intend to open the question of the fragment with him then?"

They were still in talk when a steward, a bugle in his hand, appeared in the deck-house doorway. Luis saw him and mentioned his presence to Lady Ballantyre.

"No, no!" she cried, and beckoned the man to her. "We shan't want the bugle, Fred, while we are so few. Mr. Ballantyre is on the bridge. Go and tell him that lunch is served."

When the steward had gone she turned back to Luis. "Thank you for the warning. One note of that wretched instrument, and I'd have screamed!"

He regarded her with kindly anxiety. "You are too nervy—I've been noticing it ever since I came on board. Why not pause? There is no real need for haste. Why not a peaceful week, cruising here and there, before we attempt to do anything?"

"Oh, no, no! My nerves won't fail me when we come to the bit," she replied. "And what about your own? A month ago, you wrote that they were feeling the strain."

His gaze was on the mountains of Morven. "I found an anodyne—for the time being, at any rate."

"Tell me about it."

His face darkened a shade. "I will tell you, because I do not think you will laugh. Every day, twice, I went into the Cathedral, and sat there for ten minutes, quite still, in the half-darkness, and thought what a small thing I was in the great world, and how little I mattered. That was all."

"It means something," she said, rising, "to be a good Catholic."

"Or even a bad one, Lady."

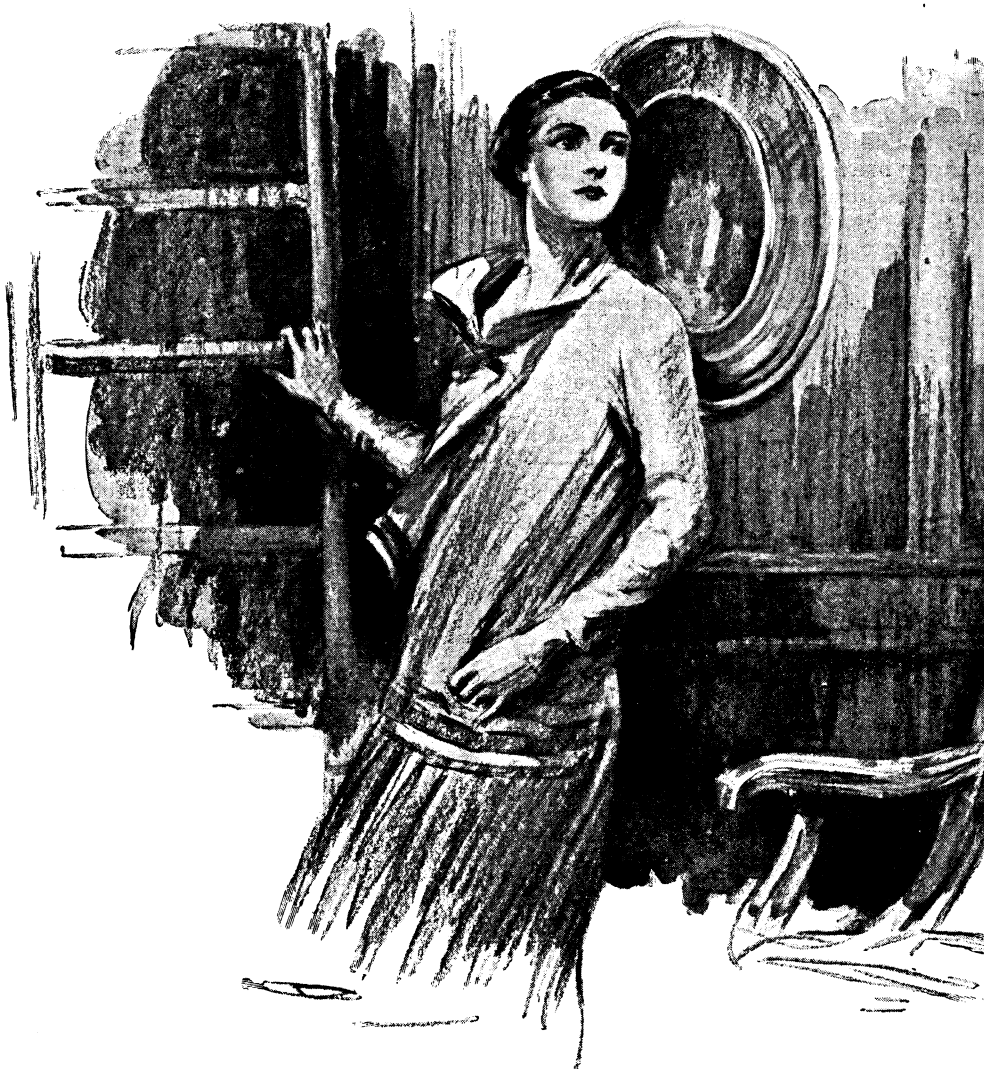
Followed by Steve, Miss Charters came down the bridge-ladder—the wrong way, a seaman would have said—displaying white silk-clad knees and smart scarlet garters, a glimpse of which caused the quarter-master, then waiting to ascend, to turn a like colour. She was a tall, lithe girl, with cropped chestnut hair, and the yachting suit of white and blue became her admirably. While her clear brown eyes suggested the chill of the topaz, and the lines of her lips hinted at hardness, there could be no questioning her beauty, which in a more exuberant age than the present might have been called dazzling, in that it flashed as a whole, rather than dawned in detail, on the beholder—a beauty of the commoner sort, no doubt, yet none the less a delight to the passer-by in a drab world. Luis's estimate had, of course, been rather ungenerous. No woman of twenty-two, or, for that matter, of seventy-two, devotes all her mind to mental arithmetic, and Winifred Charters's eyes and mouth did, on occasion, betray a warmth and tenderness not to be associated with mere sordid calculation. For the rest, denying athletics precedence of æsthetics, she bore, from the tip of her white shoe to the crown of her prettily moulded head—a head meant by nature to be shingled—that "finished" look which, if it be lost, as a rule, on man, is never wasted on woman. And she would not have been ever so slightly perturbed had someone told her that in a twelvemonth she spent on that beautiful body of hers as much as would keep several working-class families

in modest comfort for the same period; for she came of people who had lost nothing, lacked nothing, learned nothing during four years of War.

Luis was at the foot of the ladder in time to give her his hand for the last three steps, and you would have said that he adored her.

matters ? " he said, drawing her gently aside to make way for the quartermaster who, a stern Free Presbyterian, with daughters of his own, went up to inform the captain that " yon lassie ought to be skelped." " Your hand, alas," added Luis, " is quite warm."

" Why ' alas ' ? "—withdrawing it.



" ' And does my heart matter, Señor, when you are so unlikely to touch it ? ' "

Her smile of thanks held a spark of mockery, for she was not dense.

" Now that I think of it," she remarked, and her voice, you would have noted, was a trifle high-pitched, " I ought to have come down facing the ladder."

" Since you have come down, what else

" The old saying, ' Warm hand, cold heart ! ' "

" And does my heart matter, Señor, when you are so unlikely to touch it ? "

Behind them Steve laughed. " You asked for it, Señor ! "

Steve was looking happy. In less than

two hours the *Miranda* would be in Tobermory Bay.

The Señor smiled ruefully. "Nothing is left for me now but lunch." He turned to his hostess. "Lady Ballantyre, let me lean on your arm." As they went below to the saloon he whispered, "Don't bother to talk at lunch. Leave the chatter to me. Rest your nerves."



White and gleaming and graceful in the afternoon sunshine, the *Miranda* swung round the rocky shore of Calve Isle and entered the glassy haven. Luis, at the rail with his hostess, struck an attitude, declaiming:

"So this is Tobermory!"

"You absurd, amazing man, how do you do it?" said Lady Ballantyre, with a wan smile. "Even my feet are cold and—see!—my hand shakes. The whole thing seems to have become dreadfully unreal."

"Be confident! Tobermory is real; the jewels are as real as those mountains. The unreality will pass, once you meet that good cousin of yours, on your own native land."

"I'm wondering how I shall ever introduce the subject to Hector."

"That should be easy." He pointed in the direction of a barge, on which two men were, with great regularity, turning twin

wheels. "Yonder, I take it, they are still diving for the old treasure. That should give you a natural enough opening. But" —watching her profile—"as I've already said, you are driving those nerves of yours too hard. There is always to-morrow."

"That is Spanish!"

"And, on occasion, canny Scottish."

"No, no; I can't wait! Anything is better than this suspense."

From below came the musical clang of the telegraph. Lady Ballantyre's hands gripped the rail; her eyes were half closed. Luis still watched her, his heart in pain with compassion and longing. He had forgotten, for once in a while, the blood on his hands. Could he then have descried the frail shadow of a faint hope of her caring, he would have offered himself and what little was yet his, saying: "Dearest in all the world, dare the truth and be at peace."

A stroke on the gong below, and the engines fell still. . . . Two strokes, and presently the yacht throbbed as her propeller spun against the unwilling water. . . . A final stroke, and, after a while, from the bridge, the captain's curt "Let go!" The anchor plunged. . . .

Luis waited till the rattle of the cable had ceased. He glanced about him. What a scene of calm and safety! But Nature is not sympathetic. "Peace, peace," she murmurs when there is no peace.

"Lady," said Luis, his hand moving along the rail towards hers, "I will say it now, and never again. Is it too late to turn back?"

As in a flash she faced him, erect. Little flames shone in the lovely blue eyes.

"Turn back? Oh, never!"

His look was that of sorry admiration. "So your doubts went down with the anchor." He glanced aside. Steve and Miss Charters were approaching. "So be it," he said gently.

"Haven't you noticed the signal, Mother?" said Steve, pointing to a gap in the trees, high up on the hillside. "We've been waving back to Maclean."

"And Miss Maclean," added Winifred, who was carrying binoculars. "Haven't you spotted them?" she asked her hostess. "Won't you have the glasses?"

"Somebody give me something to wave," said Lady Ballantyre, rather vaguely.

Luis shook from its folds a handkerchief and presented it. "Miss Charters's cruelty has caused me to carry a reserve. May I have the glasses, Miss Charters?"

"I don't think they would be good for you, Señor. They are powerful, and Miss Maclean is pretty—isn't she, Steve?"

"Very. I'd better see that they are getting the launch ready." Steve moved up the deck.

She drifted after him.

"Your hanky, Luis." Lady Ballantyre was pale, but she smiled.

"Thank you." He smiled back—with his lips only. "And now it begins," he said. "And here comes your captain to ask for his instructions."

"Luis," she said quickly, "I believe you are afraid! Of what?"

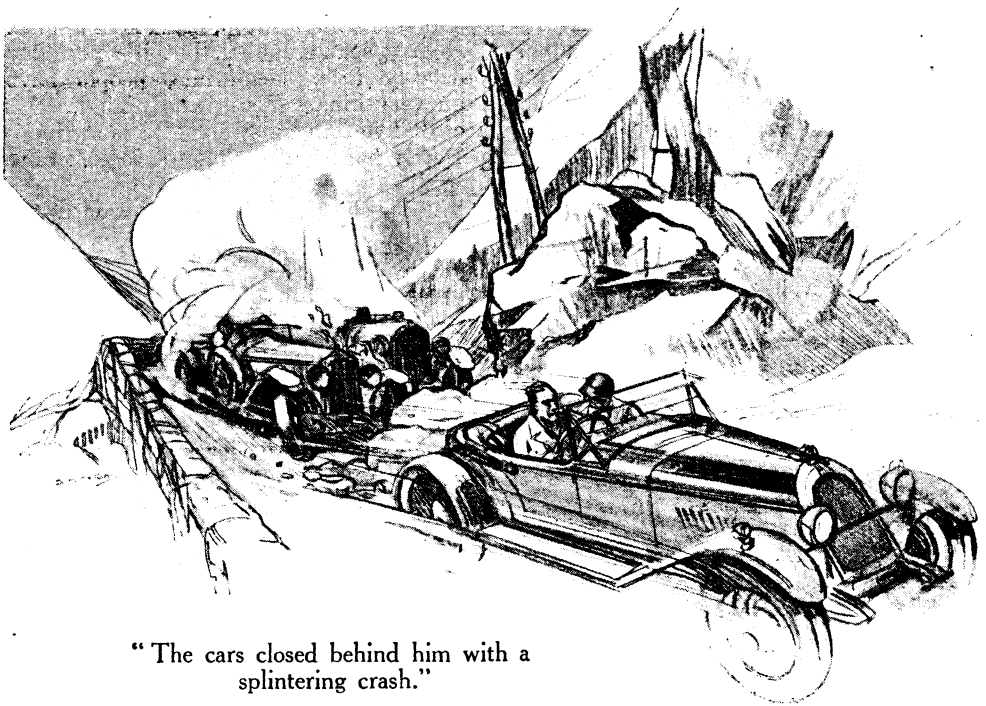
"Nothing, Lady,"—he nodded to the captain—"that I know of."

A further instalment of "Gambler's Hope" will appear next month.

THE COUNTRY COUSIN.

SHE was only a country cousin
And her visit was short and sweet,
Twice a year she would take an excursion
Up to London to shop as a treat.
She would eagerly scan the windows,
Shut her ears to the bustle and noise,
Stare open-mouthed at the traffic,
For hers were the simple joys.
She stepped with an air of detachment
Off the kerb in a one-way street——
She was only a country cousin
And her visit was short and sweet.

GEORGE THOMAS.



"The cars closed behind him with a splintering crash."

MAIDEN STAKES

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Jonah and Co.," "Berry and Co.," "Anthony Lyveden," "Valerie French," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY R. ALLEN SHUFFREY

AN accident appeared to be inevitable. A pile of granite blocks sprawled to one side of the way: what remained of the road was most narrow and was edged by a wall: and the three cars were converging at a speed which no brakes could control.

As somebody screamed, the driver of the low two-seater changed gear and, opening wide his throttle, fairly lifted his car out of the jaws of death.

These closed behind him with a splintering crash.

Roderick St. Loe brought the low two-seater to a standstill and slewed himself round in his seat.

After a moment—

"Running-boards and wings," he said shortly. "Nobody hurt, but the devil and all to pay. And, unless you very much want to, I don't think we'll wait. They're certain to say it's my fault."

"How can they?" said Miss Sabine, coolly regarding the jam. "They would have crashed just the same, if we'd been fifty miles off. Oh, and thank you very much for saving my life. I thought I knew something of driving, but only a

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past-master could have won out of that."

"My dear," said St. Loe, "I did the obvious thing." He let in the clutch. "Besides, if I'm to go racing, I ought to be able to yank a car round and about."

Miss Sabine sat very still.

After a little—

"Don't—don't take up racing," she said.

The man stared through the wind-screen.

"I think I shall," he said quietly. "Ewart will take me, and, if you really get going, it's not a bad life. Showing and testing out's a poor sort of game."

"I don't agree," said Miss Sabine. "You mustn't forget that you're pretty good at your job. 'Punch' Fairfax told me that to any motoring firm you were worth five thousand a year."

"The brutal fact remains that I receive five hundred."

"And your expenses," said Miss Sabine. "And, as often as not, a car."

"If I raced—and won," said St. Loe, "I should be pampered. Very big screw, cars, South of France in the winter—and the rest. You see, I should be a human advertisement and, as such, only the very best would be good enough for me. So I think I shall. And now let's talk about you. Does your lady mother see reason?"

"On the contrary," said Miss Sabine, "she's replied with a kidney punch. I couldn't eat any breakfast."

She took a letter from her bag and read a sentence aloud.

"*I quite hope to be able to continue the allowance I make you, but my expenses are great and, in your own interest, I would suggest that you married the Hirtschmann man: I hate to remind you that I had to marry for money.*"

It was really outrageous.

All the world knew that George Sabine's Will had been proved at nearly six hundred and fifty thousand pounds. The income of this sum had been left to Mrs. Sabine, upon whose death their only child, Gyneth, would inherit the whole. With one consent, widow and orphan had decided to live apart. Duty and taxes took their toll: but the fact remains that out of a clean fourteen thousand, Mrs. Sabine allowed her daughter one hundred and fifty a year.

"So it looks," said Gyneth, putting the letter away, "it looks as though I'd better get off. I can't quite manage George Hirtschmann, but——"

"In another moment," said St. Loe thickly, "I shall commit blasphemy. Your mother——"

"Is a first-class sweep," said Miss Sabine. "It may sound unfilial, but it's perfectly obviously true. Meanwhile, people have been very kind. Most awfully kind. But I can't live on charity for ever, and, to be perfectly honest, I don't want to go on the stage."

The car slid through Como and on to the Erba road.

"You don't ask where you're going," said St. Loe.

"You've very good taste," said Gyneth. "I'm content to leave it to you."

"I know a pub," said St. Loe, "where the red wine flows. It's cool and white and it has a balcony. The balcony, as they say, commands extensive views."

"Will the balcony be crowded?" said Gyneth.

"It wasn't on Monday," said St. Loe. "Except for the lizards, I had it all to myself."

"Take me there, please," said Gyneth.

The way and the season were lovely, but Roderick wasted no time. Hanging village and vineyard, sleek meadow and chestnut wood, hastening waters and deep, emerald valleys picking their delicate way into the hills—these and other beauties he passed with his eyes on the road. The man was for bigger game.

They whipped through Erba and on, past waggon and shrine and fountain and bright-eyed women kneading their washing in the troughs, outstripping all other traffic with a steady, effortless rush. Neither of them spoke, and Roderick sat like a statue, with his firm chin tilted a little and the shadow of a smile on his lips. From time to time the girl stole a look at his face but, if he saw her movement, he gave no sign, absorbed in the stanza of motion he had set himself to recite.

St. Loe drove with his heart. His models were the fowls of the air. A car must swoop and hover, must sail and wheel and sink, like a bird on the wing. If it could do these things, it was a good car. If not . . . It was a lot to ask; but the car that passed St. Loe would have pleased a Zoilus.

At the moment he was testing a model of which next to nobody knew. Beneath his locked bonnet lay the hopes of a famous firm. St. Loe had been ordered not to spare her and to make his report on her manners in three weeks' time.

So they came to the inn—a shy, irregular fable of storey-posts and plaster and case

ments, its white walls black-lettered by the shade of a thousand leaves.

The house stood back from the road ; but the space before it was empty, and the smiling hostess acknowledged that the balcony was free.

The two passed through a cool passage and out of a little door.

Then—

" Oh, my dear," said Gyneth, and caught her breath.

Foreground there was none. One stood staring, as may stare the high gods, upon this pretty document we call the world. Two thousand feet below, lay the Lake of Lecco, more blue and more resplendent than any jewel : beyond, rose up the mountains—the very hatchment of might, majesty and dominion, their immemorial heads powdered with snow : over all hung the cloudless heaven. The air was quick with sunshine : the firmament was gay : Lecco was smiling in its sleep.

The girl put a hand to her head. So much perfection bewildered, the brilliance of the spectacle dazzled, the giant miniature before her was breaking the rules of sight.

" As it was and ever shall be," said St. Loe gently.

My lady nodded, with her eyes on the topless hills. . . .

Luncheon was served—and brought them back to a more genial earth. No one could have been cheerless in such a dining-room. The spirits of the two rose with each simple course.

When the meal was over, Miss Sabine pushed back her chair and crossed her delicate legs.

" The world can go hang," she said. " Is this the spring in my blood, or the Chianti ? "

" Neither," said St. Loe. " You always had a great heart. Most women would have squealed this morning, when I went over the weir. But you never so much as blinked."

" Let me be honest," said Gyneth. " My heart stood perfectly still. I even tried to say ' Stop,' but my mouth wouldn't work. Which reminds me—don't take up racing. I rather value your life."

" So do I," said St. Loe. " That's why I propose to enlarge it—turn it on to the fat of the land. Of what use is five hundred a year ? Five hundred a year—I ask you. And supposing I wanted to marry . . ."

" No girl that cared would marry you if you raced."

Roderick frowned into space.

" To hear you talk," he said, " anyone would think it was dangerous."

" Oh, I wouldn't say that. But—well, it's not exactly clock-golf, is it ? I mean, the pace is against you. If anything should miscarry, a couple of miles a minute gives you no time."

St. Loe sighed.

" The old cry," he said. " And only this morning I showed you that a hell of a pace can save you as nothing else. My dear, the speed don't kill you. It's what the other fool does. Look at that wallah to-day. He must have seen the obstruction, and he carefully *waved me on.* An' going all out himself. But on the track there aren't any other fools."

" Nothing doing," said Miss Sabine. " You know as well as I do that it's the pace that kills. Not to-day, perhaps, or to-morrow : but the day after that. If George Hirtschmann would take up racing, I—I believe I'd marry the brute."

Roderick laughed. Then he took out tobacco and started to fill a pipe.

" Unless I race, I can't marry. If I race, no woman who loves me will take me on. Looks rather like celibacy, doesn't it ? "

" I don't agree," said Miss Sabine. " But then that's natural enough. Five hundred a year and expenses—well, viewed from my standpoint, you're one of the bloated rich."

St. Loe said nothing, but a hand went up to his mouth.

The girl was honest—honestly believed what she said. Had he told her that she was living at the rate of three thousand a year, she would have found him mad. Yet that was the plain truth.

Gyneth Sabine was always popular, but under her mother's chastisement she became the rage. She was taken everywhere, given the best of everything, royally entertained. She wore Julia Challenger's dresses and Sarah Pardoner's shoes. She had more engagements in London than she could ever keep : in half the counties of England she was a valued guest. She hunted in Leicestershire, stayed with the Festivals for Ascot, kept Christmas at Red Abbey. Her hostess of the moment was the young Duchess of Padua.

That she fared so sumptuously, Gyneth owed to herself. She was certainly lovely and possessed great personal charm, but her open-hearted nature was the quality that grappled her friends. She was most natural and appreciative, coveted nothing at all and, rejoicing with such as rejoiced,

wondered at the jealousy of women as at something beyond her ken. High-spirited, quick-witted and eager, she was honoured wherever she went. Crispin Willoughby once said of her, " ' As having nothing, and yet possessing all things.' " The *mot* was just.

" Let's talk of something else," said St. Loe. " I hear——"

" Half a moment," said Miss Sabine. " There's something I want to know. Why this desire for matrimony? Six months ago, at Charing, you exuded content with your lot."

" I know," said Roderick. He hesitated. " Since then I've—I've—I suppose I've been sizing things up. You know. Taking stock of life an'—an' that sort of thing." He picked up a piece of bread and crossed to the balustrade. " Come and consider the lizards. There aren't any holes in their philosophy."

Miss Sabine took a deep breath.

" Why not say that you love me? " she said. " I won't bite you or anything, and it's—well, it's the talk of the town."

" I'm mad about you," said Roderick shakily.

" I know. I'm so awfully glad. You see, from the moment I saw you, there's never been anyone else."

The man stepped to her side, and she put her arms round his neck. He lifted her up and held her close to his heart.

" But, Gyneth darling, it's no good. We can't possibly live an' move on what I make: and, if you won't let me race . . ."

" Of course we can," said Miss Sabine. " The Larches have next to nothing, and they've got a little boy."

" But they live abroad, my darling. It's so hard to be poor in England. If I had a job abroad——"

" If you had, my dear, we should probably never have met."

Roderick let the girl go and returned to the balustrade.

" I want you to be happy," he said. " And I don't think you will be happy *without a show*. I don't think you realize what life without a show means. One servant, buses, washing: listening to a band in the Park—when all your pals are at Goodwood, or setting North: refusing invitations to join the joy-wheel at Nice—' Roderick can't get away ': wearing the same old——"

A warm arm stole round his neck and a sweet-smelling palm stopped his mouth.

" I shall have you, Roderick. I know I've had a soft time, but I'd rather share your lodgings than live at the Ritz alone."

St. Loe's arms were about her.

" Oh, my sweet, are you sure? Life's such a sordid business, and the main use of money to-day is to cover the sordid side. You don't have to be frightfully rich; but, if you haven't enough to cloak, to buy off sordidness—well, it touches you up, you know."

Gyneth leaned her head against his.

" I know," she said. " I've had some. But, so long as you love me, I'll never have any more. You see, my darling, I won't have to be by myself. I can be with you almost the whole of the time. When you take a car out to Monza, I can come too: when you try out a car in England, I can sit by your side: you've next to no office work, and, if you want me, we two can be together day in and day out."

" If I want you," breathed Roderick. " Oh, Gyneth! "

The girl continued excitedly.

" We won't take a flat or furnish: we'll live at some little farm. Just outside London, you know. Two rooms which we can come back to whenever we please. The people will board us, you see, and give us good, simple food. And gradually we can furnish—bring home a chair we've found, or a rug, or a print. You see, with a car it's so easy: and you've nearly always a car. Winter or summer we'll have the laugh of the towns, and people with ten times our money will envy our simple fun."

" Gyneth, Gyneth," cried the man. And then, being past speaking, he kissed her eyes and her mouth, and praised God.

To my mind he had done very well. And, if in the end he brushed Uncertainty aside. I do not know who shall throw a stone at him. Because he loved her, he had sought to conjure up a picture which should open the lady's eyes: her reception of his effort had argued that her eyes had been open for six months or more—that she was all ready to wed him and had carefully counted the cost. He could have persisted, certainly—his fears were not wholly laid: but, if he was shrewd, he was human, twenty-six years of age and madly in love. After all, Gyneth was a beggar. If she lay in the bosom of Dives, she must be acutely aware of the presence of Lazarus' sores. Again, one day she would be rich: perhaps to-morrow, perhaps not for twenty years: but one day. Her ship—her galleon was in

sight: her future was eventually secure. Above all, he wanted her dreadfully. . . .

Gyneth was speaking.

"I believe half the women to-day propose to the men. Otherwise they wouldn't get them. Still, I did have something to go on. Your blessed face, that night, when I said I was going abroad. . . . But you wouldn't speak, although I did all I could."

"I hadn't the right," said Roderick.

The girl drew down his head and kissed his lips.

"I'm very lucky," she said. "Only a man in a million loves a woman like that."

* * * * *

A letter of some importance left Monza the following day.

May 31st.

Dear Ewart,

What shocking awful news! Simmons' loss is grievous. He knew no fear. And poor Renny. From what I gather, he'll never walk again. I always hated that race—taking a chance a minute all night long. Well, this looks as if our Spanish cake was dough. I believe we could get Melenger, but I don't think he's worth putting up. And there's no one else—unless you can get St. Loe. He's never raced, I know: but he's got a way with a car. He gave me a lift on Tuesday.



"My lady nodded, with her eyes on the topless hills."

He's here with a hush-hush Lapland, trying her out. I tell you, the lad can drive. Maiden's hands, and an eye like a hungry hawk. What's more, he's young. Moves first and thinks afterwards, you know. I should certainly see what's doing. I know he's sleeping in Paris on June 5th.

Yours ever,

Mac.

* * * * *

"Well, there you are," said Ewart, pushing aside his plate. "Thanks to this blasted night-driving, they're buryin' Simmons to-morrow, and Renny'll be on his back for a couple of months. I'm going to put up Akers, because I must: but he knows as well as I do that he's useless outside a track. He's got to see ahead five miles, before he'll put down his foot. Never mind. There's one car manned. If you want to die in the other, let me know."

Roderick St. Loe stared at his finger-bowl.

"I'd—I'd jump at it," he said slowly. "Jump with both feet. But I'm—well, I'm engaged to Gyneth Sabine, and she might stick in her toes."

Ewart's eyelids flickered. Then he lifted his glass.

"There goes a great lady," he said. "I wish you both every joy." He drank deliberately. "I imagine this means that her mother——"

"And then you're wrong," said Roderick.

"What, not a bean?" said the other.

"Not a bean," said Roderick ruefully.

There was a little silence. Then Ewart drew in his breath.

"The old Jewess," he said. "How on earth are you going to live?"

Roderick shrugged his shoulders.

"I make five hundred a year."

Ewart regarded him, blinking.

"Are you being funny?" he said.

Roderick bit his lip.

"She's content," he said shortly. "I put it all before her, and she says it's good enough."

Ewart sighed.

"If she's a good buyer," he said, "and doesn't fly too high, she ought to be able to dress on three hundred a year."

The young man winced visibly.

"I know," he said. "I know. We've had it all out. But it won't be for ever, Ewart. Mrs. Sabine——"

"Is fifty-two," said Ewart, "and full of running. I don't suppose you know it, but I was to have been George Sabine's best man. But she didn't like me a little, and so we called it off."

There was another silence. Then Roderick summoned a smile.

"You're not very hopeful," he said.

"I'm more than hopeful," said Ewart. "I'm devilish glad. I thought she was goin' to Hirtschmann, and the look of it made me sick. But, if you don't want to crash, I think I should wait a little and see if you can't climb up."

"We can't wait long," said Roderick. "Her mother's put on the screw."

"She's not without honour outside that woman's house. Gyneth Sabine is welcome wherever she goes."

"She's sick of cadging," said Roderick.

Ewart considered his wine.

"Every man," he said slowly, "must do his own sum. You say you've hammered it out, and I guess you have. How's the new car?"

St. Loe ignored the inquiry.

"You think it can't be done?"

"On the contrary," said Ewart, "I know very well that it can. You were too young for the War, but you can take it from me that it's astonishing how used one can get to what's called 'doing without.' How's the new car?"

"She's very pleasing," said Roderick absently. "One or two little things, but nothing much. I get my expenses, you know."

"Of course. Railway-fare back, after delivering a car. She can come with you, if you don't mind travelling third. Shall we go to the *Moulin Rouge*?"

"No, thanks," said St. Loe. "I'm moving early to-morrow. What—what about the Spanish Grand Prix?"

Ewart raised his eyebrows.

"It's no good discussing that, if you're not free."

"She might come round," said St. Loe. "Or—or it might be arranged somehow. What do I get?"

Ewart ordered brandy and pushed his open cigar-case across the cloth.

"I can't take you on blind," he said. "Jordan will have to vet you. There's plenty of cunning chauffeurs, but this is a different trade."

"That's understood," said St. Loe. "If Jordan passes me out, what do I get?"

Ewart lighted his cigar.

"There's a market in Spain," he said. "I've studied it for some time, and I've found what it wants. The job is to get

away. Well, I'd got everything ready, but nothing done. I was waiting for the Spanish Grand Prix. I meant to win that —and let fly. From the Pyrenees to Gibraltar, *Lapage* all over the place. I think it's a sitter. The *Lapage* is the car for Spain. But she must win the Spanish Grand Prix, or I won't even start."

Roderick nodded, with his eyes on the other's face.

Ewart continued slowly.

"If I take you on, and you lose, I'll give you a thousand pounds. If you win, you can run the show—manage *Lapage* in Spain from bottom to top. On commission, of course; guaranteed, two thousand a year."

Roderick caught his breath. Then he put up a hand and covered his eyes.

The man was dazzled—blinded.

Abroad . . . his own master . . .; two thousand pounds a year.

He saw a Madrid apartment, with tall, curtained windows and the play of a great log fire on the sober walls: he saw Seville at Easter and the blue of the Mediterranean in Malaga Bay: he saw the great pile at Burgos and the long Atlantic rollers, nosing the sands of San Sebastian under the August sun. Against each one of these backgrounds he saw Gyneth—Gyneth lapped in the comfort of the stately flat, Gyneth in the sunshine of Malaga, Gyneth at San Sebastian, with her precious lips parted and the brilliant water leaping about her slim, brown legs . . .

With an effort he found his voice.

"How long will Jordan take to make up his mind?"

"I don't know," said Ewart. "Two or three days, I should think."

St. Loe thought very fast.

"Supposing I can't get leave. If Jordan doesn't like me, I don't want to lose my job."

"That's all right," said Ewart. "I can drop a line to Robson. He knows how I'm placed. But I thought you said the lady would kick."

St. Loe set his teeth.

"I never promised not to," he said: "but I think there was a sort of understanding that I wasn't to race."

"The devil there was," said Ewart. Again his eyelids flickered. "Oh, well, of course, in that case—when will you see her again?"

"Not for ten days. When the Paduas leave for London, they'll bring her along."

Ewart sighed.

"That's done it," he said shortly. "These things are impossible to write. If you could have talked it over. . . . But, you see, I must find someone, and I simply can't wait. As it is, I'm right up against Time," and, with that, he called for his bill.

Roderick stiffened.

"I'll take it on," he said.

Ewart stared.

"But——"

"I'm not going to write, or talk. I—I don't propose to tell her. We weren't to be married till August, and—and—when's the race?"

"Sunday, July twenty-nine. If you're to weigh in, you'll have to see Jordan at once."

"In three days' time," said Roderick.

Ewart nodded.

"But you'd better sleep on it," he said. "Simmons was one in a thousand, and now he's cold. And it's four hundred miles to Tipperary, and a hell of a run."

"I know what I want," said St. Loe.

Ewart wrinkled his nose.

"Can you stand the sun?" he said. "It's apt to be hot."

"Love it," said Roderick shortly. "You'll keep this quiet, won't you? And if anyone gets asking, you might give me another name."

Ewart pulled his moustache.

"She's two months to find out in," he said. "And I don't see how you can hope——"

"It's got to be done—somehow. You must help me, Ewart. Gyneth's got to know nothing, until we're through."

"In that case," said Ewart, "you'd better not mention me. I don't suppose she hears much motoring shop, but the Press has been takin' my name these last three days. Still, we're not off yet. How soon can you be back?"

"If you'll fix things up with Robson, on Friday night."

Ewart nodded. Then he rose to his feet.

"I'll tell Jordan to stand by for Saturday. Be here at ten o'clock, and I'll drive you down."

* * * * *

That night a letter left Paris.

June 5th.

Dear Mac,

Tell no one, but I have St. Loe. His engagement to Gyneth Sabine was rather a snag, but, provided you don't breathe a word, I think we may count her out. If you

remember, we devilish near lost Simmons that very same way.

Yours,
J. E.

* * * * *

On the twenty-eighth of July, Miss Sabine laughed shortly and got to her exquisite feet.

"I'm sorry I came," she said.

"Oh, Gyneth."

"Well, isn't it perfectly plain that I'm in the way? We've hardly set eyes on each other since we were engaged. I don't suggest that's your fault: you've got to do as you're told. But the fact remains that, since Como, we've met four times. Four times in two months, Roderick."

"Gyneth, darling, it's been so awfully hard. It's——"

"Wait a minute. I haven't done. Three days ago we were six hundred miles apart. Then, out of the blue, came Judy Boleyn's invitation to come here with her and Adam and stay as long as I like. Here of all places—twenty-five miles from you. And, now that I'm here, you can't even stay to dinner—you 'must get back.'"

"To-morrow, Gyneth."

"What of to-morrow? I'd so looked forward to spending the day with you. And you offer to come 'after dinner' . . ."

St. Loe moistened his lips.

"Listen, my sweet. I'm up to the neck in a very important deal. I'm doing my very utmost to plant a car. I've appointments to-night and to-morrow I dare not break."

"I wired you that I was coming."

"I know. The appointments were made."

Miss Sabine shrugged her shoulders.

"I want to be reasonable," she said. "I want to believe what you say. But I tell you frankly, Roderick, I'm not quite sure where I am. Your letters have been—well, curious. Excuse after excuse. Why? What for? I've never thrown any stones. If you were to read them through, you'd see what I mean. And now I'm out here, you confirm the impression they've made."

"What impression, Gyneth?"

"I think that you've something to hide. I think you've had something to hide ever since we became engaged."

Desperately the man stared seawards, with his nails driving into his palms.

The Atlantic was a clear sheet of quivering blue. Its million transient dimples made up a million mirrors to mock the sun. This flamed in the heaven, blurring the outline of the mountains, setting the still air dancing, lending shadow a substance that filled the eye. Beneath this fierce benevolence the grounds of the Villa Iriberri glowed with content. The bravery of the hanging gardens and the strip of yellow sand at their foot issued an invitation that smacked of the golden world.

St. Loe put a hand to his head.

Somehow he had kept his secret. For seven weeks he had managed to blindfold his lady's eyes. And now, on the eve of triumph, Fate had brought her to the gates of the Circus itself.

Had she been proposing to attend the race for the Spanish Grand Prix, she could hardly have been more conveniently lodged. The course lay thirty miles distant. San Sebastian and Biarritz were swarming. Iriberri stood upon a headland between the two.

The girl had arrived that morning, had been driven straight to the villa, had so far heard no news. Biarritz was aflame with posters, announcing the race; but an all-night journey is tiring, and Adam Boleyn, her host, had a wound of the War. That he and his wife and Gyneth would keep Sunday within their gates was almost certain. If they did, the race would be over before she knew.

For two most powerful reasons St. Loe dared not tell her the truth. In the first place, she would be furious—would charge him with breaking faith. In the second, she would be frightened to death. The race had a bad name. Between distress and indignation she would undoubtedly require him to stand aside: and when he refused, *she would make it a condition of marriage that he withdrew from the race.*

The man turned suddenly and took the girl in his arms.

"I love you so much, my darling, and I'm on the very edge of such wonderful news. It's been hatching ever since Como. And to-morrow evening, with luck, the deal will be through. And then I can tell you the story from first to last."

Gyneth took his face in her hands.

"Let me look in your eyes," she said.

For a long moment brown eyes held blue.

Then the girl shook her head.

"Not good enough," she said quietly. "There's something at the back of your heart you don't want me to know. Something you're afraid to tell me." In silence the man let her go. "I never thought you'd play me up, Roderick: but it's perfectly

plain that I've come upon the scene too soon."

St. Loe stood up very straight.

"That's quite true," he said quietly. "Thirty-six hours too soon. I seem to have mucked things up. In a way it's my fault: and yet I don't know what else I could have done. The future matters so frightfully—your future, I mean. Ever since Como, I've been staring ahead. You know. Like when you're driving. My eyes have been on the future. And I simply haven't seen the present, because, compared with the future, it doesn't count." He stopped there and looked round helplessly. "Of course that's where I blundered. You rather value the present, and I was washing it out. Naturally enough, you're fed up."

"I'm not so fed up as I was a moment ago." The man started forward. "No. Stay where you are. I'm not so fed up, because you've spoken frankly—for the first time in seven weeks. But there's one thing you've got to explain. I simply hate asking you, because, if you lie, I shall know it, and I'm afraid of the truth. But it's got to be done. If we're to be married, my dear, I've got to know why I'm *de trop* . . . what 'appointment' you're keeping to-morrow . . . why, when I got here this morning, it was thirty-six hours too soon."

The man set his teeth.

"I'll tell you to-morrow," he said.

"You won't see me to-morrow, unless you tell me to-day."

"Oh, Gyneth, trust me this once."

"It's not a question of trusting. I said I wasn't wanted, and you agreed. Thank God, you didn't argue the point. If you had, I'd have finished it then. But you didn't. You didn't lie. You frankly admitted that I had arrived *too soon*. Well, to say the least, that's a pretty straight slap in the face, and, before we go any further, I've a right to be told what you mean."

The man clapped his hands to his eyes.

"To-morrow, Gyneth. I swear it. To-morrow I'll tell you all."

When at last he looked up, he started.

The broad terrace was gay as ever: the faint crush of the rollers stole as sweetly upon his ear: but he was alone.

From the massive oak tea-table Miss Sabine's engagement ring winked at him spitefully.

* * * * *

Dinner that night at Iriberri was not a festive meal.

Even Toby Rage—late joint-tenant of the villa and so, as he put it, a past-master of local dissipation—failed to relieve the tension which the sight of Miss Sabine's third finger had brought about.

Cecily Rage was listless: Judy Boleyn was very plainly distressed: Adam was preoccupied: Gyneth herself was painfully debonair.

Toby, who knew and liked Roderick, was ready to burst, and, since it was he that exploded the passionate mine, he may as well speak for himself.

"I give you my word, it was awful. We were about as hearty as a posse of mutes in the wind on a snowy day. I tried to keep things going, but it's very hard to be blithesome at the sign of *The Bleeding Heart*. However, I struggled on. When I'd exhausted my patter, I started on current events.

"'Who's going racing to-morrow?' I said.

"'I am,' says Gyneth, all bright and sunny as the frost on a Christmas card.

"'That's the style,' said I. 'But you won't get into the tribunes. You'll have to watch them beat it from the side of the course.'

"'Good enough for me,' says Gyneth. 'What's the race of the day?'

"'The Grand Prix of Spain,' says I.

"'Never heard of it,' says she. 'Any English horses running?'

"'It's not a horse-race,' says I. 'It's cars. I tell you it's dev'lish exciting. Over four hundred miles, and they average over eighty all the way. They're doing a hundred and fifty part of the time. If you've never——'

"'One moment,' says Gyneth, in a voice like the cut of a whip. 'One moment. Where's this race run?'

"I tell you I went all goose-flesh. Her face was white as paper, and her eyes seemed to be on fire.

"'At San Sebastian,' I stammered. 'Starts at midday.'

"She just stood up and clapped her hands to her head.

"'Thirty-six hours,' she said. 'Yes, that'd be about right. And to-morrow evening, with luck, the deal will be through. *With luck* . . . Oh, my God, and I—I sent him away.'"

* * * * *

That night a note went to San Sebastian. It was carried by Toby Rage.

Jordan opposed its delivery, declaring that his charge was asleep.

"Don't you believe it," said Toby. "What's more, if he doesn't get it, he won't close his eyes all night."

"Oh, hell," said Jordan, and led the way upstairs.

Toby Rage was perfectly right.

St. Loe was sitting by the window, with his head in his hands.

The note was extremely short.

Please give Toby my ring. I shall be there to-morrow, and I want to have it on. God speed and save you, my darling.

Your future wife.

Ten minutes later St. Loe was sleeping like the dead.

* * * * * *

The noise like that of a wasp sprang again into earshot.

Then a slight, pale-blue body flicked out of the village on the right, flashed to the corner with a scream, appeared to brush the stone wall and flung up the two-mile stretch as a shot from a gun. At the top it hovered for an instant, and then the black road was empty, and the eyes that had chased its passage turned again to the right. Only the reek of burned spirit hung in the air.

At a point above the road by the corner Gyneth, who had been standing, sat down on the grass.

"Come back to the car," said Toby, "and sit in the shade. It won't take a minute to get there, and there's seven minutes to go before he'll be round again."

"Not yet," said Gyneth.

Another snarl, and another. Flash after flash. One car at another's heels, and then two more. Somebody's brakes shrieked. A sound as of four rockets soaring. . . . And then the comparative silence, and only the reek of burned spirit upon the air.

"He's well out of that push," said Toby.

"You go back to Judy," said Gyneth. "I'll come in a little while."

"I'll be back in five minutes," said Toby. "This sun . . ."

The heat was awful.

Every steep and shoulder of the mountains was wrapped in a shimmering haze. The meadows and orchards looked unreal. The white-walled village on the right dazzled the eye. And, if you looked over the edge of the ten-foot bank, the breath of the smooth, black road smote hot upon your face.

Forty laps, and each lap eleven miles long. Four hundred and forty miles—at eighty-five miles an hour. Five hours on end at an average speed of a mile and a half a minute . . . and under that sun . . . and over that burning road.

Gyneth glanced at her wrist-watch.

Four to five minutes now, and he would be round again. At least, he should be. Of course, if he stopped at the pits, or—or anything . . .

"In four to five minutes," said Gyneth firmly.

For the hundredth time she regarded the back of her programme and counted the strokes she had set there each time that St. Loe went by. Nineteen. Yes, that was right. Nineteen. The next would be twenty. And the next he would be more than half-way.

Another car passed; and then another, with a driver in a blue silk dust-coat, with a shade to his cap. She knew him for the last of the string. The eight had gone by. There had been thirteen, to start with: but five were gone. Stopped, or crashed, or something. Any way they were out of the race. In three minutes now—no, four: between three and four—the leading car, an Italian, would pass again. And behind him, Roderick . . . .

St. Loe had been lying second for nearly an hour.

For all his cunning, experience had told at the start, and he had been left seventh, behind a formidable field. Mason, Caperletti, Detroit—men whose names ran through Europe—and, finally, the great Birot.

During the tenth lap Birot had taken the lead. This was expected. His name was on every tongue. What was not expected was that Roderick, then lying fourth, would presently pass Caperletti and then Detroit.

He had actually won second place before the girl's terrified eyes. At the bend before which she was standing, he had pulled out abreast of Detroit and the two had raced for the corner two miles away. They had flicked out of sight together, a splash of blue: and none could tell which was leading until they came round again.

After that, St. Loe and Birot had drawn away.

Gyneth recounted her strokes.

Very soon he must stop for fuel—so Toby had said. But so must Birot, and the rest. That meant some shuffling of positions, but, unless there was bungling at the pits, by

the time that all had fuelled the order should be the same. Of course, if plugs had to be changed . . .

Birot, St. Loe, Detroit . . .

Two minutes to go.

Gyneth got to her feet.

As she did so, Toby came up, field-glasses in hand.

"Early yet," he said quickly.

Gyneth smiled and nodded. The man was doing his best.

Leaden-footed, the seconds went by.

Then, suddenly, the wasp-like note . . .

A blue car flicked out of the village. Birot had stopped for fuel.

St. Loe was leading—for the moment.

As the latter whipped out of sight, the Italian appeared.

Detroit was now close to Birot, with Caperletti and Akers a mile behind. The others, it seemed, were as good as out of the race.

"He'll stop this time," said Toby. "Do come and have something to eat."

"Not yet," said Gyneth.

The two sat down together upon the rough grass.

Half Spain seemed to be keeping holiday. The road was guarded by soldiers, and, till the race was over, no man was allowed to cross. Hereabouts the banks were high, as though the way had been channelled out of the earth: and on either side lay orchards and meadows which had been mown. These were crowded. A few cars stood in the background, and one or two in the shade of a neighbouring farm; but the people, for the most part, were humble and had come afoot from the town and the villages round. The road had been closed at eleven, but five out of six spectators had been there since nine o'clock. Toby and Gyneth could have proved this. They had selected this point at half-past eight—and none too early: it was a wonderful coign. Their neighbours were mostly young. Here and there sat a matron, and there an elderly man; but young men and maidens made up the company and turned the field-day into a festival. They danced continually to the bray of concertina and tuck of drum. From where they sat, Toby counted nine drummers, each leading a different pack. Others played ball, tossing and catching and gambolling for joy of life. Now and again they would scramble to watch the cars go by: often enough they danced—while Roderick passed. After all, there was plenty of time. The last ten laps would be the big ones. Out of their ore would be smelted the battle of the giants.

By the end of the twenty-third lap, all five had taken in fuel. Birot was leading again, and Detroit was up on St. Loe. Caperletti and Akers were a mile and a half behind.

One thing was clear.

St. Loe had lost time at the pits—or Detroit was out for blood.

"He's goin' after him," muttered Toby, beneath his breath.

He was quite right.

Next time he passed the pits St. Loe received the signal to 'let her go.'

* * * * *

There was no doubt about it. Birot, the great Birot, was being pushed.

He had meant to win comfortably, and now he was being pushed.

He had seen the signal made to St. Loe and had smiled in his heart. He would show them how to let a car go. And so he had—for one hundred and twenty miles. Eleven 'fastest' laps. And now he was being pushed.

The pace was truly appalling.

With Gyneth's arm fast beneath hers, Judy Boleyn was trembling like any leaf. Toby had put up his glasses, because, when he sought to use them, he could not hold them still. Gyneth was unearthly calm, and pale as death.

The three stood together at the point overlooking the corner, above the road. They did not sit down now between the passings of the cars. For one thing, the dancing had ended, and the crowd was thick about them, disputing and agreeing and cheering as Birot the Great went by.

Detroit, driving like a madman, was lying fifth. He had had to stop twice for water, and Akers and Caperletti were a mile and a half ahead. And four miles ahead of them, St. Loe was on Birot's tail.

Of the thirteen starters these five alone were left.

The surface of the road at the corner was breaking up. The cars bumped there, like the devil. Caperletti plainly disliked it. You could see him lay hold of the wheel, as he came to the bend.

"What's this lap?" said Gyneth.

"The thirty-eighth," said Toby. "When they pass next time, it'll be the last time but two."

Gyneth nodded. Her eyes never left the village that lay to the right.

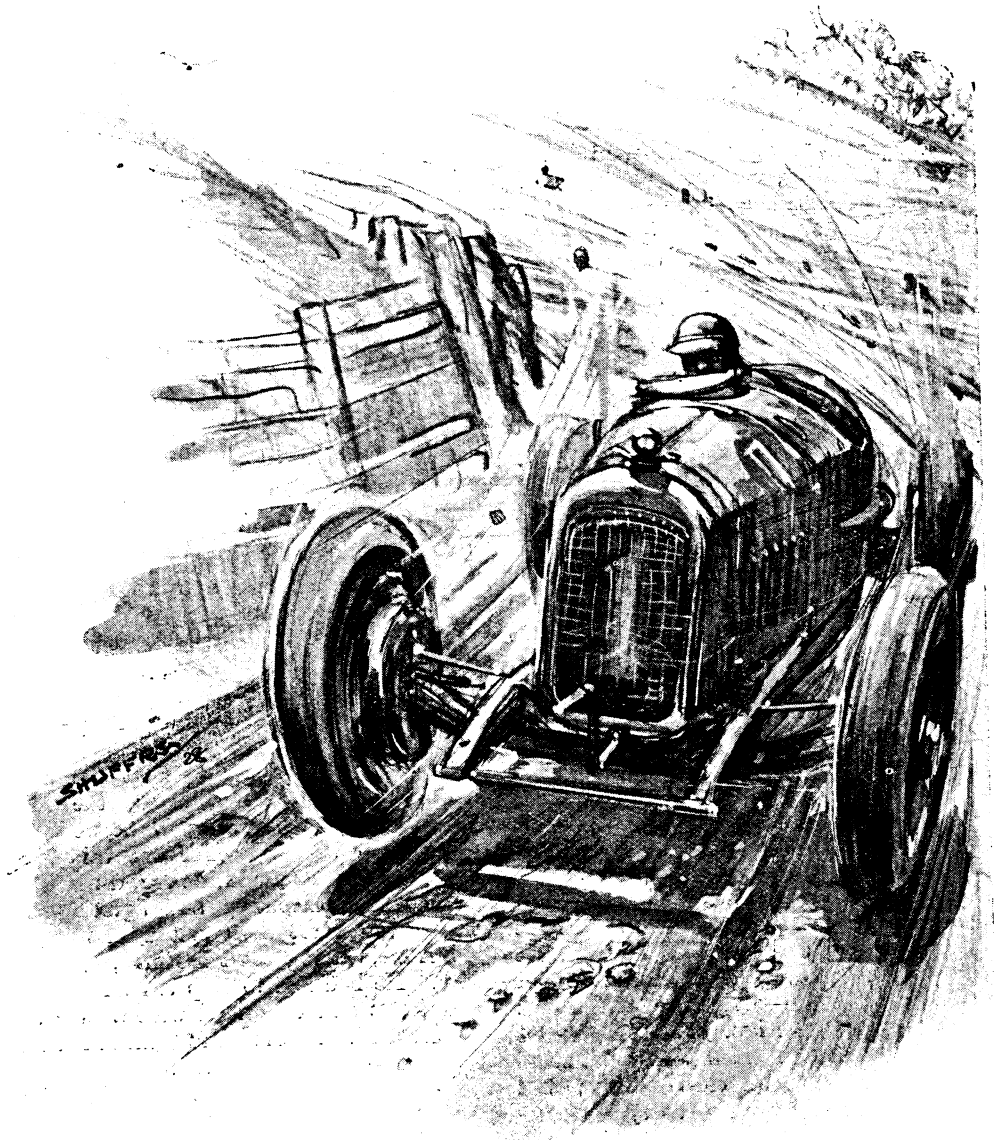
After a moment—

"What's the time?" she said quietly.

"They're not quite due," said Toby, regarding his watch. "Even if they're lapping at ninety, they're not——"

The man was leaning forward. The dust on his great brown jaw was streaked with sweat. He seemed to be urging his engine with all his might.

St. Loe was not clean behind him, but



"Unaware of his danger, Birot was holding his car. This was leaping like a ram. What did that matter? Let her leap, the beauty. He had the rails."

The familiar waspish sound snapped the sentence in two.

An instant later a red car spurted from the village, with a blue car right on its heels.

Birot was going 'all out.'

more to the left. It was perfectly plain that, if and when he could do it, he meant to attempt to pass.

Two flaps, like those of a sail, and the two were by—St. Loe a little wide at the corner, and Birot shaving the wall. His was a

rough passage, but meant no more to him than the dust on his face. The car, however, was shaken. St. Loe, going wider, gained as much as he lost.

The latter was sitting back, rock-steady as ever, with his chin tilted a little and the shadow of a smile on his lips. It was his natural pose. Gyneth or Death beside him, rain or shine, St. Loe rode like a master and gave no sign of stress.

"Faith," cried a burly Spaniard, "he might be a part of the car."

The two slid up the long rise, like cars on a cinema's screen, there to vanish like pocketed billiard-balls—balls slammed into a pocket, cheek to cheek.

The three stood staring after, their wits outrun.

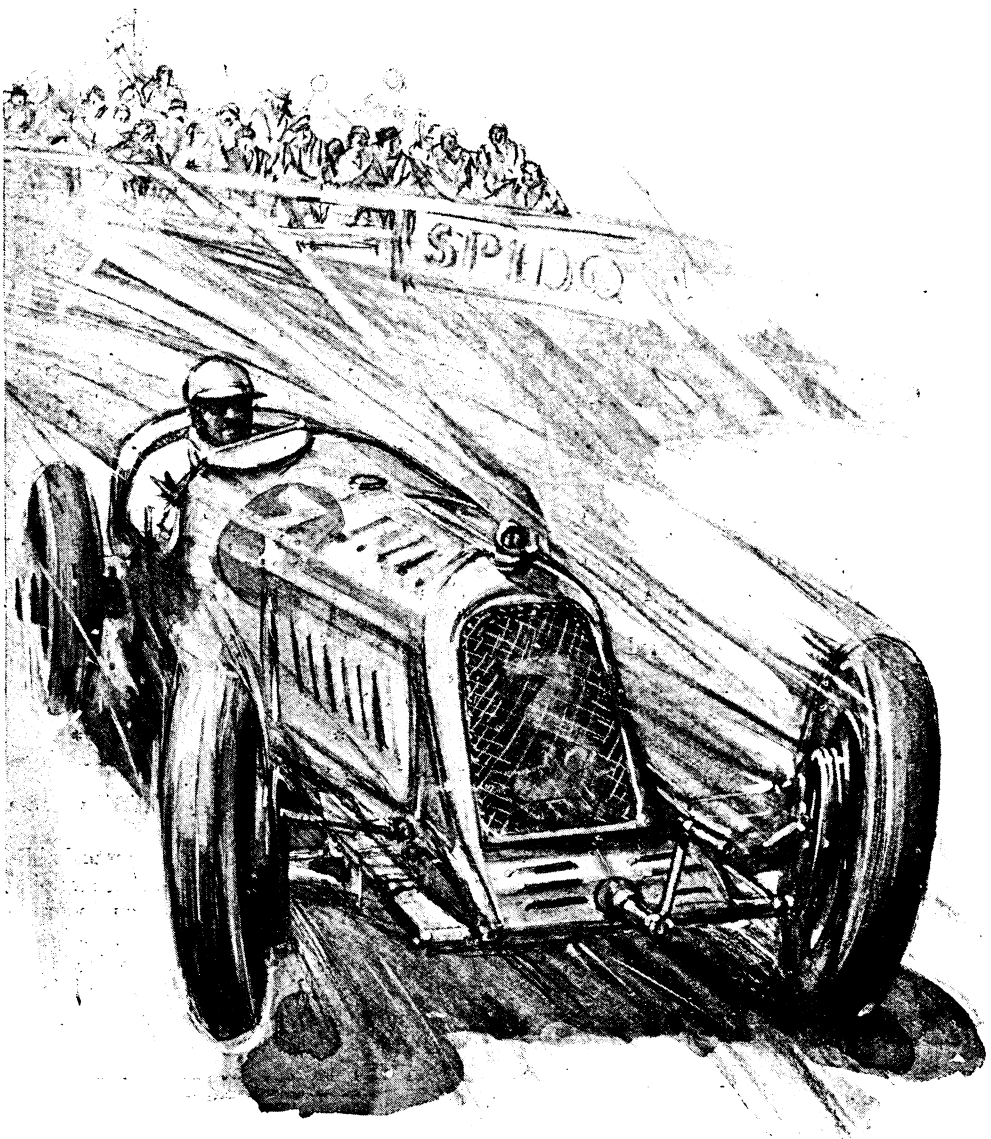
The thing was incredible—monstrous. The man on whose face they had been looking was two miles off.

Gyneth put a hand to her head.

"Oh, my God," she said weakly. "He means to pass."

Toby wiped the sweat from his face.

"They'll slow him down," he said, swal-



"A blue streak slid by him a foot away."

lowing. "They're certain to slow him down. They'll signal him from the pits."

"Of course they won't," said Gyneth. "What do they care?"

Judy Boleyn caught her breath.

"Of course he'll pass," she cried. "He's going to leave B-Birot standing and win the race. Besides, it's much safer in front."

Gyneth took the small hand in hers and held it tight.

Another snarl, and another. Caperletti went by, goggling, with Akers hard on his heels. Behind came Detroit, pelting and losing ground. The latter was plainly raging. As he passed he shouted something—it might have been '*l'eau.*'

"Only twice more," said Toby. "And Judy's right. He's goin' to put old Beetroot where he belongs. You see. Next time he'll be in front—with an open road."

The excitement was general.

Of all the multitude hardly a soul had sat down. They were talking feverishly. Prophecy was in every mouth. Such as had watches were constantly announcing the time. And all eyes were turned to the village which lay to the right.

"Are they due?" said Gyneth, at last.

"Not yet," said Toby. "I swear it. They haven't been gone——"

A sharp, sinister drone spared him the lie.

Then a red car shot into sight—with a blue, well out on its left, not a length behind.

St. Loe knew what he was doing.

Overhaul Birot he could not. The man was jealous and knew every trick of the trade. On the track St. Loe could have done it, but the fellow held him at the corners and he had not the time to do it between the bends. Unless he could outwit Birot—pass him when he did not expect it, he would never get by. And now the moment was coming—at this corner where the surface had gone. Birot had the right to the rails. Well, he could have them here—and lose half a length by bumping, where the going was rough.

Both cars were going like fury. Half the width of the road was between them, and twenty-five yards from the corner the red car was hardly clear.

As Birot thrust for the corner, St. Loe on his left turned in.

The crowd gasped, and Gyneth put a hand to her throat.

The cars were converging. Birot was driving for the corner, and Roderick was driving for Birot. The cars were converging at thirty-six yards a second—forty, perhaps. More. The corner taken, *Birot would bear to the left.* They were bound to meet—simply bound to. There was a slice of the tarmac which each must have. The laws of balance required it. Whoever tried to avoid it must overturn.

St. Loe put his foot right down.

Unaware of his danger, Birot was holding his car. This was leaping like a ram. What did that matter? Let her leap, the beauty. He had the rails.

A blue streak slid by him a foot away.

As he bore to the left, his nose was less than a yard from the other's tail.

The cars had crossed.

The roar that went up to heaven must have been heard for miles.

St. Loe heard it, and Birot—two lengths behind.

The crowds at the next corner heard it, saw the blue car leading and took it up.

Judy Boleyn was dancing: Toby Rage had a Spaniard by the arm.

"Gone away!" he screamed. "Gone away!" He pointed a shaking finger. "Look at him shifting, Pedro. He's leaving Beetroot standing, an——"

Something swayed against him, and Judy cried out.

"If I could sit down," murmured Gyneth.

But Toby picked her up and carried her back to the car.

* * * * *

Five hours had gone by.

The dinner at the *Maria Christina* was a thing of the past.

Ewart, the shrewd, the imperturbable, was jesting with the reporters and slapping them on the back. MacMahon, supine upon a sofa, was endeavouring to sing. Jordan, who never drank, was the worse for wear. Akers was writing home, enclosing a preposterous cheque. And the name of the winning car was on everyone's lips.

From the terrace at Iriberri Roderick smiled at the sea.

Gyneth's arms were about him and her hair was against his cheek.

"You see, Gyneth, darling, I had to. We couldn't have lived on five hundred, and——"

"Suppose you'd been killed."

"I'd thought of that. And that would have been far better than bringing you down. I was out of my mind at Como."

"I think you were in love there," said Gyneth.

"I was very selfish," said Roderick, putting her hand to his lips.

"Who told you that? Ewart?"

Roderick swallowed.

"He didn't put it that way, but he opened my eyes."

With a little half-sob half-laugh, the girl set her cheek against his.

"My simple darling," she said. "When will you see?"

"But——"

"Perhaps you will when we're married. Of course Ewart's cramped my style. It's you I want, my darling. That's why, when I found you were racing, I nearly died. You see, I'm truly selfish. It's a way beggars have."

"And queens," said St. Loe gently, holding her close to his heart.

Gyneth put up her mouth.

Our next issue will contain a further story by Dornford Yates.

OLD FRIENDS.

AM I unfortunate, to be alone,
Now twilight falls,
In this dim room,
Where through the gloom
Sinister shadows by the fire are thrown
On sombre walls?

This is the hour when knights in brave attire
And fairies dear,
And kings themselves,
From oaken shelves
And ancient books, creep out beside the fire
And bid me cheer.

Arthur relates old tales of knightly things
And chivalries,
Hector recalls
The Trojan walls
And Icarus tells us how he lost his wings
O'er Grecian seas.

Wamba the Witless jests with Ivanhoe,
Pistol with Nym;
Jane Eyre upholds
The Yorkshire wolds,
And Dare-Not-Lie, his gallant face aglow,
Sings us a hymn.

These are my friends, and this the hour I love
Of all the best;
The winds without,
May storm and shout,
Here I am happy with my treasure-trove
And greatly blest.

KATHLEEN E. EVETTS.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS ATHLETICS

By CAPTAIN F. A. M. WEBSTER

PEDESTRIANISM in athletics is almost dead in England to-day, and I think it is the public school spirit that has killed professional foot-racing.

About the middle of last century England was famous for its professional runners, but the first threat to their occupation came in 1849, when a properly organised amateur sports meeting was held at the Royal Military Academy, Woolwich. In the following year the position of the amateurs was further strengthened by Exeter College, Oxford, starting an athletic gathering, which still survives. In 1852 Kensington Grammar School initiated the first real school sports meeting, an example followed in 1853 by Durham University, Harrow and Cheltenham. Rugby School held its first regular meeting in 1856, Winchester in 1857, and Charterhouse and Westminster in 1861, by which year athletic sports meetings had become a regular feature of school and college life. In 1864 Oxford and Cambridge met for the first time, and two years later the English Championships commenced.

Prior, however, to this institution of regular sports meetings with a number of events in each programme, the famous "Crick Run" had been founded at Rugby in 1837, the Shrewsbury School Steeplechase coming into being a few years later. Meanwhile, hurdle races of 100 yards over ten flights of hurdles had been in vogue at most of the tutors' and dames' houses at Eton in the early 'thirties, and in 1845 that great school started a steeplechase and ran sprint and hurdle races, which came off on the road, all on different days.

The excellence of the schoolboy athletes of that period is exemplified by J. H. Ridley of Eton College, who won the first English Quarter-Mile Championship in 55 sec., and the following year took the Quarter again, returning 52¾ sec., and also the 100 Yards in 10¾ sec. In 1868 he won the Inter-University Quarter-Mile for Cambridge in 51 sec. A year later C. L. Lockton, afterwards a famous English Champion, began his career in the under 14 years of age events at Merchant Taylors School. And at the same school in 1871 we begin to hear of Sir Montague Shearman, now President of the A.A.A., and his brother, J. Shearman, both to become English Champions, winning events.

From that time onwards the public schools began to supply both Oxford and Cambridge with first-class young performers, as is proved by the number of university athletes who achieved championship honours in the 'seventies and 'eighties.

The better appreciation, by club athletes, of athletic technique put a period, however, to the almost unchallenged success of the university men, who had only untutored boy athletes to draw upon, since it is only recently that the schools have ceased to treat athletic sport as a rather indifferent means of filling in the fag-end of second football term. Added to which, at both schools and universities, the athletic season, ending in March or April, comes at an unsuitable time of the year, when climatic conditions are not such as encourage strict training, while the weather often militates against first-class performances.

From time to time, however, the public schools still contrived to produce athletes of outstanding merit. Notable among them must be mentioned the Hon. M. J. Brooks, of Rugby. In 1873 he won his school high jump at 5 ft. 2 in., and the long jump at 20 ft. 3 in. These performances by a boy of eighteen suggested that he would make his name as a long jumper rather than in the other event. The following year, however, witnessed a phenomenal improvement in his high jumping, and as a Freshman at Brasenose College, Oxford, he won the Oxford and Cambridge event at 5 ft. 10 in., and a



THE HON. M. J. BROOKS (RUGBY AND OXFORD).

Holder Inter-University High Jump record, 6 ft. 2½ in., made in 1876.

few days later took the English Championship at 5 ft. 11 in., thus eclipsing by an inch-and-a-half the world's record made by R. J. C. Mitchell of Manchester in 1871.

Then in 1876 Brooks won the Oxford University Long Jump at 21 ft. 11 in. and the High Jump at 6 ft. ⅛ in. This, incidentally, was the first time that anyone had ever achieved 6 ft. In the Oxford and Cambridge Sports he took the Long Jump at 21 ft. 8½ in. and the High Jump at 6 ft. 2½ in., which latter performance still stands as the Inter-University record. In the same year he again won the English Championship by clearing 6 ft. in a downpour of rain and from a sodden grass take-off.

C. L. Lockton, Merchant Taylors' School, probably the most phenomenal schoolboy athlete of all time, was a championship contemporary of M. J. Brooks, although several years his junior.

At fifteen years of age Lockton was quite capable of holding his own in first-class company, and in 1873, at sixteen, he won the English Long Jump Championship with a leap of 19 ft. 4 in. In the following year his form deteriorated, probably through overwork, but in 1875 he not only won the English Long Jump Championship at 20 ft. 10½ in., but cleared more than 22 ft. in his school sports, and was very nearly the best sprinter and hurdler in Great Britain.

During the next few years this amazing boy, who equalled "evens" in many a hundred yards trial, succumbed to inferior rivals in competition, but in 1879, when twenty-two years of age, he found his true form, and at the summer championship meeting won the 100 Yards in 10⅕ sec., the 120 Yards Hurdles in 16⅗ sec., and the Long Jump at 22 ft. 2 in. Mr. Lockton had a graceful, taking style, and was one of the most perfectly proportioned athletes who ever ran in competition.



C. L. LOCKTON (MERCHANT TAYLORS' SCHOOL).

Mr. Lockton was probably the greatest all-round schoolboy athlete of all time, and has the distinction of having been the youngest winner of an English Championship.

In his day, unfortunately, there were no Public Schools Championships; that great incentive for schoolboys to treat athletics seriously was provided, perhaps fortuitously, in 1890, when Mr. C. H. Mason presented to the London Athletic Club a Quarter-Mile Challenge Cup to be competed for annually by Public School boys. The first holder was T. C. Eastley, of Haileybury, who, by a curious coincidence, won his race in 55 sec., exactly the same time as J. H. Ridley, of Eton, had returned when he took the first English Championship title in 1866, while N. S. A. Harrison, Haileybury, the first winner of the High and Long Jumps in 1897, is the father of that C. F. N. Harrison, Eton, who set up the present 100 Yards record in 1923, and who won the same event for Cambridge against Oxford in 1924.

In 1891 B. Whitaker, Charterhouse, won the Public Schools "Quarter" in 52⅗ sec., a fraction faster time than was recorded by J. H. Ridley for his second English Championship win in 1867. So good, however, was Whitaker's record that although it was equalled by L. J. Cornish, of Merchant Taylors, in 1898, it was never beaten until D. Barrington-Hudson, Imperial Service College, covered the distance in 52 sec. flat in 1927. It may be noted in passing that W. G. Grace, Jun., son of the famous cricketer, was placed fourth in the Quarter-Mile race in 1893. His father, incidentally, won the "Strangers" Quarter-Mile at Merchant Taylors' Sports of 1869 in 53 sec.

Meanwhile a real Public Schools Championship Sports Meeting had come into being from the smallest of beginnings and vast improvement in performances had been taking place. This is witnessed by the following table of initial performances, present standards for which medals are awarded, and records.

It will be observed also that the programme has been gradually growing as the years have gone by, many events being added in 1897 especially, when members of the promoting club presented challenge cups to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the late Queen Victoria.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS CHAMPIONSHIPS RECORDS.

Event.	Instituted.	First Championship Performance.	Championship, 1928.	Present Standard.	Record.	Year of Record.	Made by
		Min. Sec.	Min. Sec.	Min. Sec.	Min. Sec.		
100 Yards	1897	– 11	– 10½	—	– 10⅗	1923 1926	C. F. N. Harrison, Eton. R. S. Rowlands, City of London School.
440 Yards	1890	– 55	– 52⅗	– 55	– 52	1927	D. Barrington-Hudson, Imperial Service College.
880 Yards	1892	2 6⅘	2 4⅖	2 10	2 1⅗	1927	H. S. Townend, St. Edmund School, Canterbury.
1 Mile	1896	4 42⅗	4 39⅘	4 50	4 32⅖	1900	H. W. Gregson, Oundle.
1 Mile Walk	1919	8 57⅗	8 2⅕	8 15	7 32	1923	J. Carne, Polytechnic School.
120 Yards Hurdles	1896	– 17⅖	– 16 1/10	—	– 16 1/10	1928	G. Dyas, Lancing.
¾ Mile Steeplechase	1897	4 5⅕	4 9⅗	4 20	4 3⅗	1923	V. E. Morgan, Charterhouse.
		ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.	ft. in.		
High Jump	1897	5 5	5 10½	5 3	5 10½	1928	H. A. Simmons, Taunton's School, Southampton.
Long Jump	1897	20 4½	22 3½	19 0	22 3½	1928	J. Simpson, Oundle.
Pole Vault	1925	9 1½	10 1	8 6	10 1	1928	H. G. Young, Bedford Modern School.

JUNIOR EVENTS.

(Open to boys from 14 to 16 years of age.)

		Min. Sec.	Min. Sec.		Min. Sec.		
100 Yards	1914	– 11⅕	– 11 1/10	—	– 10⅕	1923	J. C. Heap, Latymer Upper School.
250 Yards	1914	– 29⅗	– 30	—	– 28½	1927	A. J. Ford, Sloane School.
		ft. in.	ft. in.		ft. in.		
High Jump	1914	4 10	5 1	—	5 5	1927	G. M. Moll, Bedford School.



[*Sport and General.*

CHAMPION SON OF A CHAMPION.

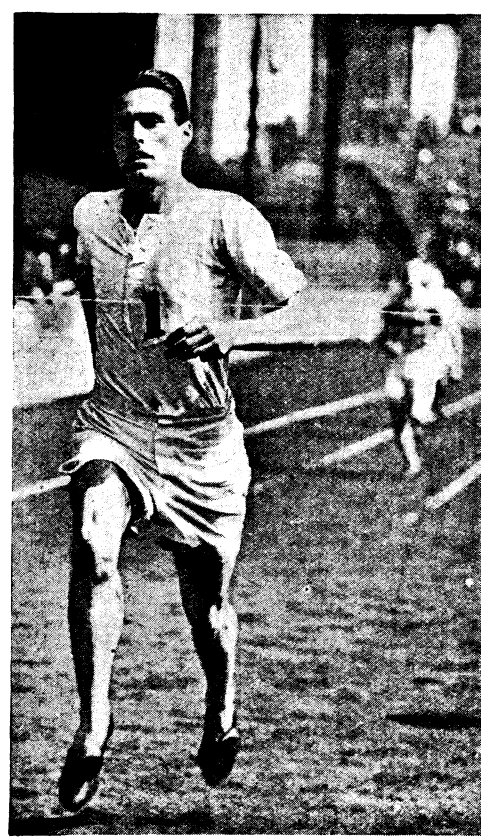
C. F. N. Harrison, Eton and Cambridge, who ran 100 Yards in the Public Schools record time of 10⅘ sec. in 1923, is the son of N. S. A. Harrison, Haileybury, who won both the High and Long Jumps in 1897.

The closing year of last century saw the Meeting raised to real championship standard, through the generosity of Mr. W. J. B. Tippetts, High Sheriff for London, who presented a Public Schools Athletic Challenge Cup to be held for one year by the school scoring most points. The points are reckoned from 6 to 1, going from the first to the sixth place, and, in addition, every competitor recording a standard performance scores one point for his school. But still, the meeting is not, and never has been, styled officially the "Public Schools Championships." This apparent modesty upon the part of the London Athletic Club, who promote the meeting annually, is, I fancy, a *beau geste* to assuage the fears of those head masters who have set their faces sternly against the Meeting, on the ground that it affords the boys an undue amount of publicity. But still, the boys themselves regard the Meeting as a Championship one; it is held in the Easter holidays and they continue to compete.

At the beginning of 1901 a Conference of Head Masters took place, and the action of those of their colleagues who had opposed the Meeting from its inception was upheld. That year the entries were small, but the performances of those who did compete were remarkably good.

From the beginning of the present century until the outbreak of the Great War the Championships were full of interest, by reason of the large number of really great athletes they brought to light.

In 1913, one of the two most unlucky of all the Public Schools Champions made his first appearance. This was W. Morris, of Bury Grammar School. That year he took the 100 Yards in 11⅕ sec., and the Long Jump at 20 ft. 7½ in. A year later he set up a new Long Jump record of 21 ft. 1¼ in., and also won the Quarter-Mile in 52⅖ sec., only a fifth of a second outside the then existing record.



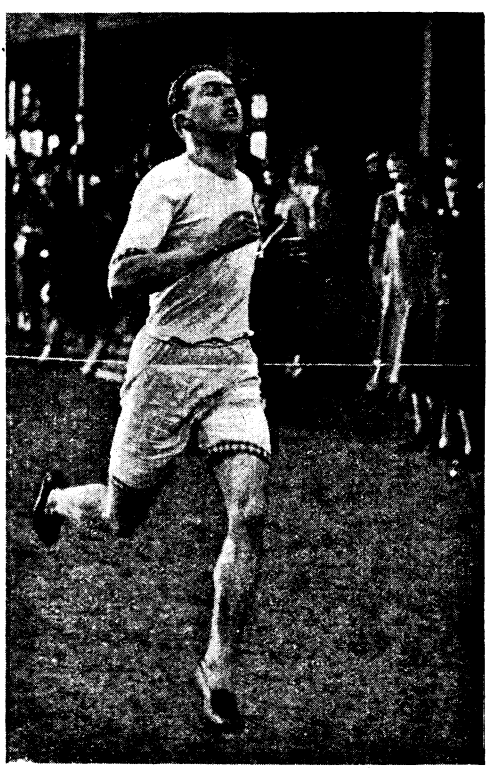
[*Sport and General.*

THE WILL TO WIN.

D. G. A. Lowe, Highgate and Cambridge, has won championships and broken records almost at will.

Later that year Morris went up to Cambridge and is said to have jumped farther than 23 ft. as a "Fresher." He was in France within a few months of the outbreak of hostilities and sustained a severe wound to his jumping foot. Despite this injury, which left him with a slight limp, Morris resumed athletics upon his return to Cambridge and missed a half-blue by less than an inch in 1922; when the Rugby blue, K. R. J. Saxon, took second place to H. M. Abrahams.

The other most unlucky champion I have in mind is H. P. Bowler, Malvern. In 1925 he won the Public Schools Hurdles in 17 sec., but during three years at Cambridge has found himself up against the world's best in Lord Burghley and G. C. Weightman-Smith, such a pair as he might never strike again in a hundred years. Bowler, however, has one more chance, and will, I hope, achieve his Blue this spring. He was, incidentally, only kept out of last year's British Olympic team by the return to England from America of B. Lucas, of Bowdoin College, U.S.A., who was qualified by birth at Manchester.



[Sport and General.

V. E. MORGAN (CHARTERHOUSE AND OXFORD).

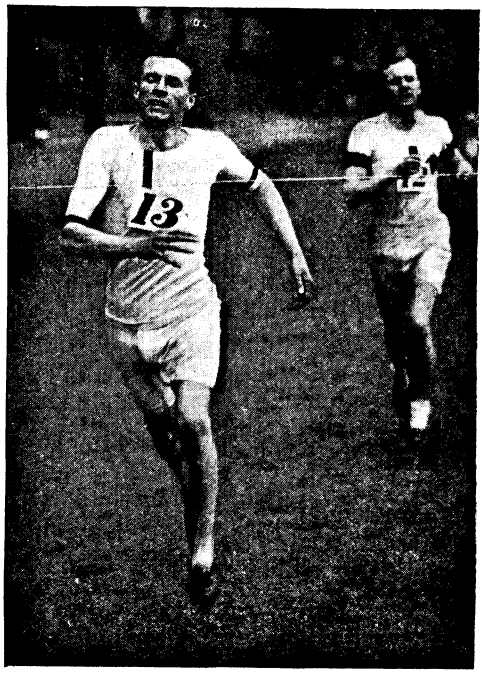
Following a Public Schools Three-quarter Mile Steeplechase record of 4 min. 3⅘ sec. in 1923, V. E. Morgan was awarded his Blue at Oxford and in 1928 represented Great Britain at the Olympic Games.

During the War period those members of the L.A.C. who were too old for active soldiering, and so stayed at home, rendered the nation a signal service by carrying on the Public Schools Sports Meeting without a single break. It is, indeed, not too much to say that their enterprise did more than anything else to enable us so quickly to reconstruct athletic sport after the War that Great Britain was able to send to the Olympic Games at Antwerp in 1920 a better team than had ever before represented us.

In our Olympic team which won the world's 1,600 Metres Relay Championship were G. M. Butler, Harrow, who had won the Public Schools 100 Yards, Quarter-Mile and Long Jump in 1917; and J. C. Ainsworth-Davis, Westminster, who had run well in the 1914 100 Yards. Butler, of course, has enjoyed the unusual distinction of representing Great Britain at three Olympiads, while other Public Schools Champions of the period 1914–1928 who have attained to Olympic status are: E. W. Wheeler, Latymer Upper School; W. R. Seagrove, Highgate; E. A. Montague, Rugby, 1920; H. M. Abrahams, Repton, 1920 and 1924; R. J. Dickinson, Harrow; C. E. W. MacIntoch, Eastbourne; L. F. Partridge, Aldenham, 1924; D. G. A. Lowe, Highgate; W. G. Tatham, Eton, 1924 and 1928; V. E. Morgan, Charterhouse; H. A. Simmons, Taunton's School, Southampton; C. E. S. Gordon, Charterhouse; and J. C. Heap, Latymer Upper School, 1928.

The most remarkable of all the Public Schools Champions, however, are undoubtedly D. G. A. Lowe, Highgate, and H. A. Simmons, Taunton's School, Southampton.

D. G. A. Lowe made his first public appearance in 1920, when he won the Public Schools Half-Mile in 2 min. 6⅘ sec., a time which neither flattered his beautiful style, nor gave any indication of the great career which was to follow. Even as a Freshman at Cambridge he did not get inside 2 min. In 1923, 1924 and 1925, however, he won the Oxford and Cambridge Half-Mile, returning 1 min. 57⅘ sec. for his best time. Then came the anomaly of Lowe winning a world's championship before he had gained an English title. At the A.A.A. Championships of 1924 he was beaten by three-quarters of a yard by H. B. Stallard in 1 min. 54⅗ sec.,



[*Sport and General.*

FORM TO THE FINISH.

H. S. Townend, St. Edmunds, Canterbury, is seen holding his form to the very last stride of the half-mile race of 1927, wherein he brought the Public Schools record down to 2 min. 1⅗ sec.

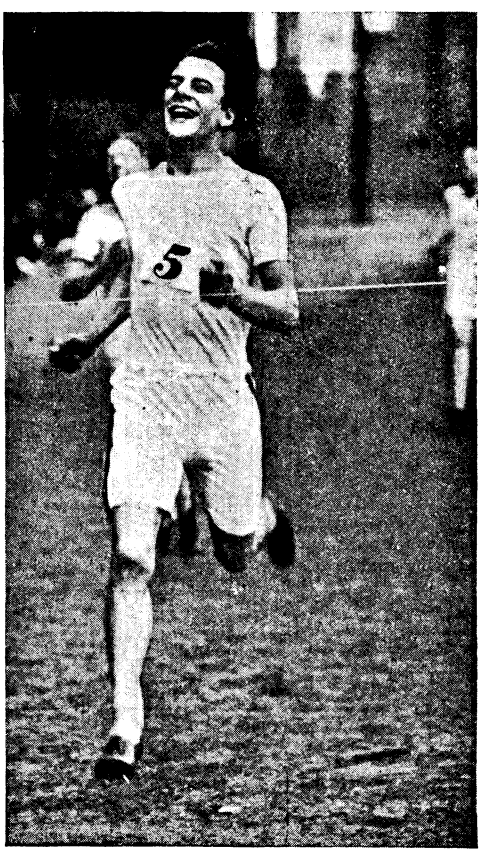
but went to Paris and won the Olympic 800 Metres (874 yards 3 ft. 8¼ in.) in 1 min. 52⅖ sec. In 1925 he represented Oxford and Cambridge against Harvard and Yale in America, and won the Half-Mile in 1 min. 53⅖ sec. The year 1926 held a great disappointment for him. In June he made a world's record by running 600 yards in 1 min. 10⅖ sec., but in July, although again beating world's record, he lost the English Half-Mile Championship to O. Peltzer, Germany, who returned 1 min. 51⅗ sec. In 1927 and 1928 Lowe took English titles at both 440 and 880 Yards, returning as his best time for the Quarter-Mile 48⅘ sec., and at Amsterdam he retained his Olympic laurels by winning the 800 Metres in the new record time of 1 min. 51⅘ sec.

I well remember the first appearance of Simmons, a long, lean, red-headed youth of sixteen years of age, at Stamford Bridge in 1927, for he flatly refused to start jumping until the bar had been raised to 5 ft. 4 in. He then just walked up to the jump and went over with a straight leg-kick, finally tieing at 5 ft. 8 in. with C. L. Napier, of Sloane School.

Early in 1928 I had the privilege of taking Simmons in hand and changed his style from the antiquated "Scissors" to the more economical "Eastern Cut-off" form. At first he went right back, but in April took the Public Schools title at the new record height of 5 ft. 10½ in. Then he emerged into the biggest kind of open competition, and at the English Championships, 1928, he achieved his ambition to beat 6 ft., and was placed third with a jump of 6 ft. 1 in.

Then came the greatest triumph of all, for, at seventeen years of age and while still a schoolboy, he was chosen to represent Great Britain at the Olympic Games. At Amsterdam he was placed seventh with a jump of 6 ft. 1⅝ in., and C. E. S. Gordon, Public Schools Champion in 1926, cleared 6 ft.

After that Simmons was picked to represent the whole British Empire against



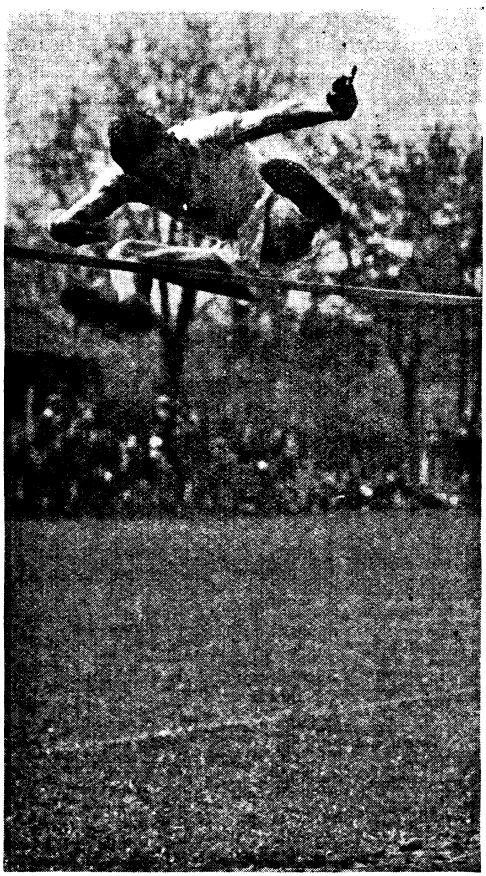
[*Sport and General.*

THE HAPPY VICTOR.

D. Barrington-Hudson, Imperial Service College and London University, established the Public Schools Quarter-Mile Record of 52 sec. in 1927, and evidently enjoyed the experience.

America, and in that contest tied with C. E. S. Gordon for fifth place at 6 ft. This, surely, is the most remarkable career that any schoolboy has yet achieved, for Simmons has the unique record of being the youngest athlete who has ever represented any nation at the Olympic Games.

The beginning of the post-war period found the L.A.C. under the presidency of the late



[*C. I. Lopdell.*

A BRITISH HOPE.

G. M. Moll, Bedford School, at fifteen years of age established a Public Schools Junior High Jump record of 5 ft. 5 in. Scientific technique is the secret of his success.

Lieut.-Colonel B. C. Green, C.M.G., T.D., and fully determined finally to establish the status of the Public Schools Sports Meeting. In 1921 there were 409 entries from sixty schools, and H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, who was an interested spectator throughout the Championships, presented the awards to the winners, and the Champion School Challenge Cup to Shrewsbury, at the conclusion of the Meeting. E. P. Hewetson, who captained Shrewsbury that year, gained blues subsequently for athletics, cricket and hockey. In 1924 the Meeting was again greatly honoured, H.R.H. the Duke of York attending upon that occasion to witness the sports and present the prizes.

Ever since the War the popularity of the Public Schools Sports Meeting has increased. Whereas the entries numbered only just over 100 in 1917, last year's total was 650, and represented the entries of more than seventy schools, so that it was found necessary to run a two days' meeting, many of the preliminary heats being decided on the Friday afternoon.

In 1923 there was an amusing sequel to the meeting, when V. B. V. Powell established a new Long Jump record of 21 ft. 9¼ in., besides being third in the sprint, and D. D. Homan was placed second in the High Jump. These performances enabled Clifton to win the Public Schools Challenge Cup by one point from Harrow and Charterhouse, who were equal second with 20 points; but Powell and Homan, who had compiled the necessary score, were smartly called over the coals by their head master for having dared to compete at all.

Despite all opposition, however, the fact remains that many famous schools have inscribed their names upon the Cup, and a far greater number have competed for it and still strive to achieve that honour. Among the unlucky ones who have been within an ace of achieving their ambition are Eton, Charterhouse and Haileybury. The following is a list of the schools that have held the Challenge Cup since its institution :—

1899 Repton.
1900 St. Paul's and Great Yarmouth (tied).
1901 Great Yarmouth.
1902 Bedford.
1903 Bedford and Wimbledon (tied).
1904 Wimbledon.
1905 Ipswich.
1906 Ipswich.
1907 St. Lawrence, Ramsgate.
1908 Reading.
1909 Abingdon and Oundle (tied).
1910 Highgate and Merchant Taylors (tied).
1911 Battersea G.S.; Perse School, Cambridge; and St. John's, Leatherhead (tied).
1912 Emmanuel.
1913 Bradfield and Bury (tied).
1914 Bury.
1915 Emmanuel.
1916 Latymer Upper.
1917 Harrow.
1918 Rugby.
1919 Merchant Taylors.
1920 Shrewsbury.
1921 Shrewsbury.
1922 Eastbourne.
1923 Clifton.
1924 Lancing.
1925 Bedford.
1926 Bedford.
1927 St. Edmunds, Canterbury.
1928 Oundle.

This year's meeting might have been made



[*Sport and General.*

A STYLE OF HIS OWN.

J. Simpson, Oundle, does not favour the modern "hitch-kick," but last year put the Public Schools Long Jump record at 22 ft. 3½ in. by his own peculiar method.

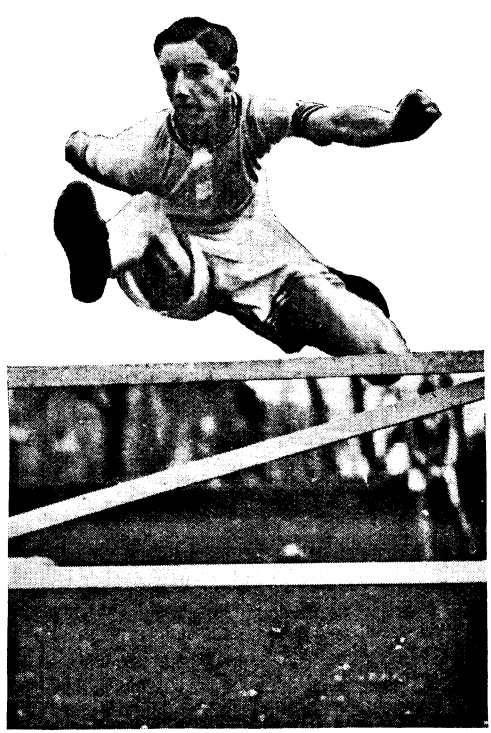
most interesting through the representation of foreign schools. Sweden expressed a wish to send over a team, and in every case the boys might have been capable of equalling the present British Public Schools records. Unfortunately the Committee decided against the proposal, but no doubt a schoolboys' international meeting will take place in the near future.

That these "championships" have done a great amount of good is, I think, clearly proved by the performances achieved and by the brilliant subsequent careers of those who have made their athletic début at this meeting. I believe, moreover, that most head masters are now favourably disposed towards it.

The promoting club also showed admirable enterprise in 1925 when they added the Pole Vault to the programme. This event, formerly so popular throughout the land, had fallen into almost complete disuse, owing to a series of unfortunate accidents. These were caused through the employment of heavy hickory or ash poles, which sometimes snapped transversely and impaled the wretched young athlete; but nowadays only bamboo poles, which are perfectly safe, are used, and the sport of pole vaulting is enjoying a great revival. For instance, P. B. Ogilvie, Charterhouse, second last year at 9 ft. 10 in., has since cleared 11 ft. 2 in.

This year the Committee has decided to add to the Public Schools Sports programme the Javelin and Discus Throwing events, now practised and popular at a number of progressively inclined schools, an excellent decision, since it is in these events and, indeed, all the field events, that Great Britain has the greatest need of finding adequately efficient representation at the Olympic Games and other International fixtures.

The great improvement in British Public Schools athletic sport which has been witnessed during the last decade is not, how-



[*Sport and General.*

ECONOMICAL HURDLING.

G. Dyas, Lancing, who in 1928 reduced the Public Schools Hurdles record to 16 1/5 sec., realised clearly that the hurdler who would achieve fame must skim the top of his fences.

ever, entirely due to the efforts of the L.A.C.

After the War, P. J. Baker, C.U.A.C., and B. G. D. Rudd, O.U.A.C., both athletes of enviable Olympic fame, saw to it that Oxford and Cambridge re-entered the public arena, from which our University athletes had held all too long aloof, and their efforts were ably backed up by such former Public Schools Champions as W. R. Seagrove, G. M. Butler, W. G. Tatham, and several others.



[*C. I. Lopdell.*

ALL IN THE SWING.

H. G. Young, Bedford Modern School, vaulted 10 ft. 1 in. for a new Public Schools Pole Vault record in 1928. His form shows the last word in the latest swing-over action, which is superseding the Amercian "Jack-knife."

The winning of numerous English Championships by Oxford and Cambridge men whose names have since become household words in the world of athletics aroused a great interest in the sport at the Public Schools, and boys began to study technique and seek instruction. And, since demand must inevitably produce supply, it followed that it was not long before famous "blues" were occupying posts as games masters at the schools. G. M. Butler has worked wonders at Lancing, W. R. Seagrove has considerably improved the standard of performance at Glenalmond, and good work is being done by W. G. Tatham at Eton, G. R. Renwick at Charterhouse, A. R. Alston at Bedford, and A. C. B. Bellerby at St. Lawrence, Ramsgate.

Up to the post-war period athletics at the schools had begun and ended with the school sports each spring. Hardly any time was allowed for training, proper instruction in athletic technique was conspicuous by its absence, and matches with other schools or clubs were almost entirely unknown, except that Harrow met Charterhouse annually, and there may have been one or two similar fixtures.

In 1920 the Achilles Club, consisting of past and present Blues of the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge, was formed, and began at once a most important missionary work. This comprised yearly visits of Achilles teams to the Public Schools to contest handicap matches, and the amount the boys have learned by precept is enormous. Apart from that, meetings now take place between Highgate and Aldenham; Cheltenham and Shrewsbury; Felsted and Bishops Stortford; Lancing and Eton; Aldenham and Westminster; Edinburgh Academy and Murchiston; and there is a triangular match between Dover College, St. Lawrence College, Ramsgate, and King's College, Cambridge, and so the boys are coached and encouraged to take athletics seriously for the honour of representing their schools.

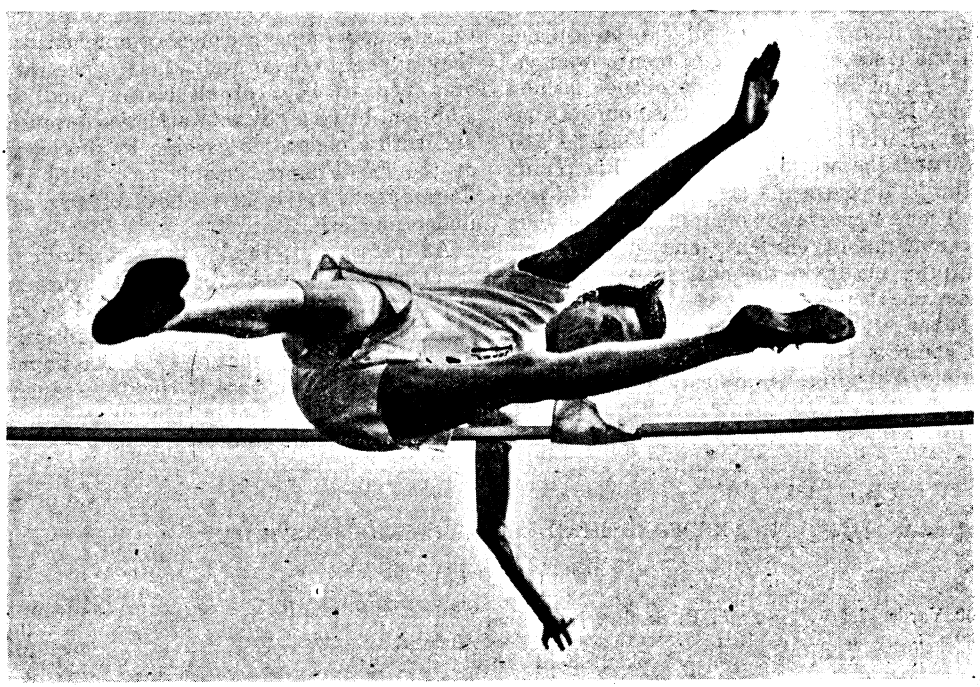
Formerly it was no unusual thing to see boy after boy collapse at the end of a hard-run race, but to-day such a spectacle is rare indeed, simply because the boys are allowed an adequate period for preparation and do their training under proper supervision. Then, again, in pre-war days the performances of many of the Public Schools jumpers, hurdlers, shot putters and hammer throwers were little short of ludicrous. The boys were willing enough and strong or springy enough, but they had never been shown how these none too easy events should be practised, and so they made a complete mess of them.

Another circumstance that militated against successful achievement was that no one realised that a hammer or a shot weighing 16 lb. was far too heavy for even the strongest of youngsters to juggle with efficiently, and so these two events have gradually become unfashionable, whereas they are still popular in America, where the weights are graded at 8 lb., 10 lb. and 12 lb.,

according to the age and strength of the boys who have a fancy for this type of athletic endeavour.

So far as the jumping and hurdling are concerned it may be said that in pre-war days practically all the high jumpers used the very old-fashioned "scissors" style, in which one leg goes over after the other and the body is held upright, instead of being transposed from a vertical to a horizontal position as the bar is crossed, while the long jumpers relied simply upon their natural speed and spring. Little attention was paid scientific skill, notably the Merchant Taylors' high jumper, E. C. Archer, who set the record at 5 ft. 7¾ in. in 1917, and P. R. O'R. Phillips, Highgate, who made a hurdles record of 16⅗ sec. in 1910, and a year later took the Oxford and Cambridge event and the A.A.A. Championship, both in 16⅕ sec.

Nowadays, however, it is the exception rather than the rule to find boys taking part in the Public Schools Championships who rely solely upon their natural ability, and I should say that no boy since the War has won a challenge cup who has not supple-



[*Sport and General.*

PERFECT HIGH JUMPING.

H. A. Simmons, Taunton School, Southampton, Public Schools record holder, 1928, 5 ft. 10½ in., cleared 6 ft. 1⅝ in. at Amsterdam and was the youngest athlete who has ever represented a nation at the Olympic Games.

to the "lift" into the air, which gives the jumper his length, and no one thought of such a thing as the "hitch-kick," or running step in mid-air, which adds much to the measurement, until V. B. V. Powell came along in 1923 and carried the record up to 21 ft. 9½ in. All of the hurdlers up to 1914 were of the bent-leg persuasion, although that traditional, one ought almost, now, to say fabulous, style had gone out of fashion in America before ever the twentieth century commenced.

And yet there were exceptional boys who achieved signal success despite their lack of mented his normal powers by a good deal of acquired skill. There is, also, an admirable tendency for every boy to try out a number of styles until he finds the one best suited to his individual requirements. Thus among the forty-three high jumpers who competed for the Senior Challenge Cup last year one saw many adaptations of the old "scissors" style, quite a number of boys using the "Eastern Cut-off" exceedingly well, and one or two "Western Rollers," who must have spent weeks and weeks at steady practice to gain the degree of efficiency displayed.

Not all the boys, however, will conform to the accepted styles and their desire for personal experiment should certainly be encouraged. For example, J. Simpson, of Oundle, who last year established a new Long Jump record of 22 ft. 3½ in., has no "hitch-kick" and not a lot of "lift," but gets his distance by lifting his legs straight up to the front until they are parallel with the ground and level with his hips. I do not say that this is a good style, but it suits his particular bulk and build.

The old style of bent-leg hurdling, in which the athlete's body is lifted so much higher than is necessary above the top rail of the fence, is hardly ever seen nowadays. It has, in fact, gone right out of fashion since 1920, in which year the young Canadian, Earl Thomson, came to England and startled the world by running 120 Yards Hurdles on grass at Queen's Club in 14⅘ sec.

The new generation of straight-leg hurdlers is remarkably efficient, and it will not surprise me if, in the near future, we find one of them winning a Public Schools Challenge Cup in something less than 16 sec.

There is another circumstance that certainly is tending towards the improvement of schoolboy performances, and that is the movement, started in Bedfordshire under the presidency of the Right Hon. Lord Ampthill, G.C.S.I., G.C.I.E., whereby Championships are promoted for Juniors (under 17 years of age) and Colts (under 14 years of age). These meetings are held annually in the Easter holidays and provide a great inducement for boys, some of them not yet quite old enough to aspire to honours at Stamford Bridge, to take the preparation for their own schools sports seriously and as a stepping-stone to their County titles.

In some respects these County Juvenile Championships are even more important than the Public Schools Meeting, for the County programmes are more comprehensive, they appeal to a far wider field, since they are open to boys of all classes, and, in addition, bring a boy into athletics seriously and with a chance of learning by precedent at the most impressionable age, since the Colts events are open to boys of any age under fourteen.

At present, I think, the standard of juvenile athletic achievement is higher in Bedfordshire than elsewhere, and it is for this reason that I give that County's records, which show clearly what amazing feats quite small boys can produce if they are caught young enough, sensibly encouraged and properly coached.

BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY JUNIOR RECORDS.

(Under 17.)

		Min.	Sec.
100 Yards Flat	A. R. Snellus, Haileybury	–	10⅖
200 „ „	H. A. Southgate, Bedford Modern	–	21¾
400 „ „	F. G. Cook, Bedford School	–	52⅖
800 „ „	H. Towle, Luton	2	55⅘
400 Yards Flat	Bedford Modern School	–	48
Relay (4 × 100 yards)	(H. A. Southgate, H. G. Young, F. P. Hood, M. E. Kingdom.)		
480 Yards Hurdles	Bedford School	1	14⅖
Relay (4 × 120 yards).	(G. R. Nevile, G. M. Moll, C. Owens, F. N. Pope.)		
120 Yards Hurdles (3 ft.)	G. M. Moll, Bedford School	–	17

		Ft.	In.
Long Jump	A. R. Snellus, Haileybury	17	6¾
High Jump	G. M. Moll, Bedford School	5	5¼
Pole Vault	H. G. Young, Bedford Modern	10	2¼

BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COLTS RECORDS.

(Under 14.)

		Min.	Sec.
100 Yards Flat	L. A. Emmerton, Bedford Modern	–	12
220 „ „	F. R. Webster, Bedford School	–	32⅖
440 „ „	No record at present.		

		Ft.	In.
Long Jump	J. Moll, Bedford School	13	4
High Jump	G. R. Tate, Bedford Modern	4	8¼
Pole Vault	F. R. Webster, Bedford School	8	2

BEDFORDSHIRE COUNTY COLTS RECORDS (*continued*).

		Sec.
100 Yards Hurdles (8 flights 2 ft. 6 in.)	C. G. Prigmore, Bedford School H. Emmett, Bedford Modern	16
400 Yards Flat Relay. (4 × 100 yards.)	Biggleswade Council School (H. Cowles, E. Bowles, J. Douglas, W. Warren.)	52

That athletics should be encouraged at our public and elementary schools is, I think, a self-evident fact. For, all said and done, running, jumping and throwing form the fundamental basis of every other kind of sport and recreation, and that Great Britain is still short of first-class athletes has been clearly proved time and again by the performances of our Olympic teams. That lack of adequate representation will continue until athletics are treated at all our schools as seriously as cricket or football and an equally good system of coaching instituted. But meanwhile the boy who does the best he can for himself is laying the foundation for a successful sporting career, since the freshman at the universities or the subaltern in the Services who leaves his school with a good athletic reputation is sure of a hearty welcome in his new state in life.

THE ARTERIAL ROAD.

I AM the new arterial road,
I cleave the fields the farmer sowed,
Athwart those fields once crowned with corn
A ceaseless whirring roar is borne.
No flowery banks adorn my sides,
No tree oncoming traffic hides,
My ample spacious curves are fain
To make the high road look a lane.
And some who travel to and fro
Are wonderstruck because I show
A country never seen before
Though but a furlong from their door.

Along my surface broad and bare
The leisured and the busy fare,
The outline of my course at nights
Is stippled by a chain of lights.
And some there be who much admire
The neatness of my plain attire,
While others dub me with a curse
The eyesore of the universe.
Serene 'mid homage or abuse
I function for the public use—
Obedient to progression's goad
I am the new arterial road.

JESSIE POPE.

SHORTENING

By CHARLES CALDWELL DOBIE

ILLUSTRATED BY L. PERN BIRD

ONCE for a few weeks between jobs I worked in the box-office of a picture house out in the Mission District of San Francisco. I tell this not by way of apology, but merely to set the scene for the story of Jim Rod which follows. It had been a cold, rainy winter and the office without sufficient heat. We had a coal-oil stove, as I remember, and ceilings that figuratively reached to the sky. The result may not have been zero weather, but it gave a very good imitation. Californians have a way of blandly freezing just because the sun is shining, and they freeze in rainy weather, too, because rainy weather is supposed to be warm weather. But during this particular February neither the sunny days nor the rainy days were tempered with any dash of mildness. So between shows I kept the glass slide before the ticket window closed.

One night about six o'clock, just as I was waiting for the proprietor to relieve me, I heard a tap on the pane. I looked up, expecting to see a prospective ticket purchaser. There was no one. I went on sorting tickets, thinking some street urchin had been playing me a trick. The sound came again, this time a little bolder. I went forward and drew back the slide. The outline of a weather-beaten hat came into view, and next the face of an old man was raised to mine. A slender hand pushed back the hat; two faint blue eyes confronted me.

"I wonder if you could spare me a quarter." The voice was thin but distinct. "It is raining again."

What roused my interest was the absence of any whine in the man's tone. His hope that I might aid him and his statement about the weather lacked both pathos and emphasis. I said, "Are you hungry?"

He shook his head. "I am never hungry, but a man must eat."

"Never hungry!" I was young and my voice rose incredulously.

"Oh, once upon a time perhaps. When I was a youth and life stretched before me."

"You haven't fared so well since those days, eh?" I don't know why I questioned him, since that never had been my custom in such situations. I gave or withheld intuitively without cross-examination, and I rarely denied an old man.

"Oh, I've always had a roof over my head and three square meals."

"That's something!" I returned in a baffled voice.

"Yes, you're right—that is something."

"A roof and three square meals all these years. And, now, you're broke."

He answered my implied question very simply. "It was the roof of a penitentiary. I was sent up for life, but last month they let me out. . . ."

I stood staring foolishly at the two faded eyes that by this time seemed to have receded past any recognition of their colour. "Sent up for life!" I echoed. "How long did you serve?"

"Forty years."

"Forty years! Good Heavens!"

At that moment the proprietor came in.

"Wait for me on the corner," I said to the old man. "I'll be with you in a moment."

He melted into the night with the swiftness and instability of a ghost. I said good evening to my boss, put on my hat, and went outdoors. The rain was coming down with cold, stinging determination. The old man was waiting for me at the corner.

We went into a Greek chop-house where most people in a hurry took short orders at the counters—one of those chop-houses where a T-bone steak, fried potatoes, coffee and pie are the rule. There were a few unoccupied tables for leisurely patrons who seemed never to materialise. We sat down at one of them; my guest took off his hat. A thick crop of snow-white hair was shapelessly mantling his head. He saw me look-

ing at it, and with a sudden alertness he divined what I was about to remark.

"It *is* thick for a man past sixty," he said. "Clipping it short—that's what does it." He ran his fingers through its shallow length. "Only a month old, too. Somehow, I can't quite get used to it."

I was annoyed at myself; the last thing I wished to do was to remind the man before me of his past. I wanted him to eat and drink and be as merry as his condition would permit. I had elected myself to the rôle of patron, and I hoped to overpower him with my beneficence. It is hard to deny oneself a swagger in the face of misfortune. A waiter came bustling up. I handed the old man a menu. He set it aside with a show of decision. The competence of this gesture had something well-bred about it. He might have been a man sure enough of his resources to order what pleased him.

"I should like a bowl of milk," he said, "and some crisp French bread. And if it is possible to get some sweet butter——"

Frankly I was disappointed. I had expected to be quite dazzled by his demands. "You'd better make that bowl of milk half cream," I said to the waiter, determined to put upon my benevolence the seal of at least a small opulence.

My guest raised his hand in protest. "I'm afraid that would be too rich. After forty years one can't quite——"

I checked him with a nod that was half understanding, half impatience. The waiter took my order and bustled away.

"You see, I had my experience," he went on. "The very first night I came to town I spent every bit of my five dollars at dinner. It made me frightfully ill. Even the seat I sat in was too comfortable. It's extraordinary how one can lose his capacity for luxuries."

His voice, at first rather far away, seemed to come nearer with every word he uttered.

"You had five dollars, then?"

"Yes. The State gives every man a suit of clothes and five dollars when he leaves prison. The suits are cast-offs from the men who enter. Mine was of very fine quality. I sold it only last week. Traded it for these rags and a dollar or so to boot." He looked down at his garments with a smile of amusement.

"You spent all your money the first night? That was a silly thing to do. Didn't you know——"

His glance stopped me. "I knew nothing except that I had been in prison for forty years. Freedom is like wine—it goes to the head. It frightens you, too, at first. Besides, I'd always been like that—improvident."

"And you never got over it? . . . I thought experience——"

I stopped again in confusion. His faded glance had extraordinary qualities of dignity and reproach in them. "You don't get over things like that. They're in your blood. When I was a child I always ate up my share of candy first. I had a brother who hoarded his." He said this as if he had caught his brother in a fault.

"How have you lived all these weeks?"

"For two weeks I had a job. . . . Then they discovered I was a jail-bird. Naturally they let me out."

"How did they discover it?"

"Another ex-convict told them."

"Another ex-convict!" I cried incredulously. "Why, I should think a fellow in the same mess would be the last person on earth to betray you. Was he your enemy?"

"No."

"Disliked you, maybe?"

"I think not."

"But there must have been a reason."

"I reminded him of a past he wanted to forget."

"What nonsense!"

"No, that isn't nonsense. There was something more to it, too. He hadn't any sense of sportsmanship. You see, he never had any background. He wasn't what you would call a gentleman."

I am ashamed to say that for the moment I was amused. My companion saw it. But he was far from annoyed. He merely said, calmly:

"That's another thing you don't get over."

At that moment the waiter returned with our orders, and presently my fatalistic friend was crumbling crisp bits of French bread into a shallow bowl of milk.

During the silence that followed I began to turn over in my mind the best approach to the question I was burning to ask. For what had this man before me been sent up? Murder, of course. There is very little else for which they give a life sentence in California. But he was such a mild old gentleman.

I repeat I thought over every possible avenue of approach, and, then, I asked a totally different thing. I said:

"After forty years you must see great changes?"

"I saw greater changes in prison," was his

answer. "Life doesn't stand still anywhere."

I flushed. He had a quality of candour and simplicity that was continually putting me in my place, and, in my irritation, I blurted out quite brutally:

"How did it come they didn't hang you?"

Once I had said it I was appalled. Fancy putting such a question to a fellow being just because one was nettled! But to my surprise he didn't even wince. He replied: "There was a doubt or two in the minds of the jurors. So they salved their consciences with a life term instead of the noose."

He said this without rancour, but with just the slightest touch of irony. A curious desire to curry favour with him came over me. "That's all wrong!" I blurted out. "A man is either guilty or innocent."

He looked at me with tepid amusement. "Are you quite sure of that?"

"Aren't you?" I countered.

He shook his head. "No one is ever entirely innocent of anything. A man who puts himself in the position of being even falsely accused has contributed something to the crime of which he is charged. Never forget that. I did not actually murder the woman they found me with, but I was part of the procession that led up to that murder."

"A woman? . . . What was her name?"

"Rose Fanchon." He said the name wistfully.

"Was there a romance?"

"Of a sort."

"Do you mind—I mean would you like to tell me about it?"

"If it would amuse you."

"*Amuse!*"

"Come now, isn't that what it amounts to? Youth is always so full of heroic evasions!"

"Very well," I said with a touch of exasperation, "it would amuse me frightfully."

"That's better," he commented, and he flashed a smile at me, a mere ghost of a smile that I fancied in its hey-day must have charmed Rose Fanchon past much that was prudent. Or, to use his own words, had made him part of the procession that had led to her undoing.

He gave me his background first. Boston in the seventies. Not exactly dull but crowded rather with a certain gay respectability. A gentleman might get tipsy, for instance, so long as he remained presentable. He might gamble within the limits of discretion. He might even go so far as to deny God if he did so with gentility. In short, a background in which the Ten Commandments became symbols of good form rather than definite rules of conduct. A suavely respectable life that the man before me had been educated to grace by the combined efforts of a tutor, an exclusive prep. school, and Harvard. But sometimes the crust of respectability spreads out too thin; crumbles like pastry that has too much shortening. The tutor, the exclusive prep. school, Harvard, may have fitted our hero for discretion in his social contacts, including his social lapses, but it had not trained him for the monotonous rigours of a career in his father's counting-house. He was a conspicuous failure, and on that day when he was called into his father's study to receive the parental reproof he felt the profound humiliation that only a man could whose sensibilities had been ground too sharp.

"I had hoped that you would be a credit to the family name, sir!" had been his father's choleric remark.

The shaft struck home. At that moment the young man decided to yield up the name that he had graced so indifferently. He would go out and seek his fortune alone under another escutcheon. He would not be a drag, a disappointment, a constant thorn in the side of his people! His father smiled. It was the prerogative of youth to take chastisement with an heroic gesture. But, in this case, the father did not know the heroic gesture was made earnestly, so earnestly that that was the last time he was ever to see his son's face.

The next morning a youth re-named Jim Rod began an overland journey to California.

California in the late seventies. San Francisco, to be precise. There could not have been a greater contrast. Open drunkenness, open gambling, open pursuit of women, with God pushed into such a far background that to deny him was superfluous. And Rose Fanchon, do not forget her. Up to this point, Jim Rod's recital had been stamped with the monotony of all preliminaries. But once he mentioned Rose Fanchon the whole narrative was shot through with vigour. He said:

"I never shall forget the first time I saw her sweep into the dining-room of the Occidental Hotel. She was alone, and in those days a woman entering a public place un-

escorted was conspicuous. At least, conspicuous to me. She was dressed in the heavy mode of the period, all ruffles and bows and trailing skirts. Very elaborately and handsomely dressed, but that was hardly a matter to attract me excessively. The striking thing about her was her skin. It was like clear ivory, without colour or blemish. And her hair was a curious shade of pale tawny gold. The waiter met her with a smile, half servile, half impudent, and led her with a flourish to a table in a far corner of the dining-room. I remarked that it was a table at which was placed but a single chair. This chair faced the company of diners, and Rose Fanchon slipped into it with an easy grace that had a trace of defiance in it. Could it be possible that this beautiful creature ate every night in solitude? I thought. Her passage through the room had left a tremulous disquiet behind. The men seemed restive, the women uneasy. It was an effect one sensed rather than saw. I beckoned my waiter—a shrewd and gossipy Frenchman.



"Rose Fanchon slipped into the chair with an easy grace that had a trace of defiance in it."

"'Who is that extraordinary woman?' I inquired. He lifted his eyebrows significantly. 'Rose Fanchon,' he replied. 'She is unmarried?' 'So far as I know.' 'A woman of means?' The waiter shrugged. 'Perhaps,' I pressed, 'she is a professional woman?' I was thinking of the stage. 'As to that . . .' He shrugged again. 'You see . . . well, many women live by their wits. There are thirty thousand such in San Francisco.'

"I do not know why, but I was horrified. I felt my heart contract—not at the thought of the thirty thousand, but at the thought of this one, this particular woman, facing the world shamelessly. 'You cannot tell me . . .' I said to the waiter. 'I mean, surely a hotel of this reputation . . . Such things are not done.' He pretended to

arrange the bread basket. 'You are imagining the worst. Rose Fanchon is handsomely provided for.' A dull pain shot through my heart. 'And her admirer?' I questioned, finding my voice. 'Is for the moment away. He dines in this very room with his wife when they are in town. If you stay the week out you will see them.'

"I felt suddenly stifled. I put my hand instinctively to my heart. And, in that moment, I knew that I was in love with Rose Fanchon past all reckoning."

I think he must have been in love with her still after all these years; his voice was so vibrant when he spoke of her. A natural enough thing, I reflected. She was the last woman he had come in contact with. Still, he had suffered, too, because of her, suffered hideously. It seemed strange.

He sat that first night in the dining-room of the Occidental long after she had left it. She smiled at him as she passed his table on the way out. He trembled all over. The waiter saw what had happened. He said: "There are a hundred men in San Francisco who would give a thousand dollars just for that smile."

He sat, as I said, a long time, dawdling over his coffee. He wanted to calm himself, to get over his supreme agitation. The tutor, the prep. school, Harvard, had trained him to be suspicious of supreme agitations. He withdrew to his room and tried to sleep. It was no use. He rose and went out into the night.

He had heard about the Chinese quarter. He asked a policeman for directions. It was the Chinese New Year and the streets were very gay. Temporary stalls lined the curb, filled with seed-cakes and preserved ginger and strips of candied cocoa-nut. Ordinarily this would have charmed him past all belief. But his mind refused to be beguiled from its consuming idea. He could think only of Rose Fanchon.

As he was leaving the quarter a coolie selling blossoming lily bulbs accosted him. Would he buy some of his wares? The lilies were ranged in two or three rows upon a shelf-like stand. There must have been at least fifty. He was preparing to brush the coolie aside impatiently when it struck him that the quality of these lily petals suggested Rose Fanchon's strange ivory pallor, and their yellow centres matched curiously the indescribable gold of her hair. A whim seized him. He turned about and said: "How much?" The coolie held up one finger. "Ten cents!" he answered. "I'll take them all!" returned Jim Rod.

The coolie was amazed, but he soon recovered his immobility. For fifty additional cents he agreed to carry them to the hotel. He loaded the lilies into two wicker baskets. They were not just fifty blossoms, you understand, but fifty growing bulbs spilling their fragrance. Jim Rod led the way, and the Chinese, in his blue suit and coolie hat of straw, trotted behind.

When they came to the hotel Jim Rod called two bell-boys out to the curb. The coolie unslung the wicker baskets from the pole. "Take these to Miss Fanchon," was Jim Rod's command. The bell-boys stared and hesitated: it was nearly midnight. . . . Jim Rod slipped a silver dollar into each of their hands.

All the next day Jim Rod was in a fever of hope and expectancy and despair. He questioned the bell-boys. Rose Fanchon had received the tribute of blossoming lily bulbs in silence. Amused silence? he wondered. The possibility made his heart stand strangely still. Naturally, she did not come down to the dining-room for breakfast, nor was she there at the luncheon hour. She was so late making her appearance at dinner that he had almost given up in despair when she came into the room. She was dressed much more simply than on the previous evening, and she had wound a spray of lily blossoms into her hair. But this time when she left she did not lift her eyes, much less smile at him.

He was crushed utterly. He could not eat, he could not sleep.

A week went by. He saw her every night in the dining-room. She never missed having a spray of lilies in her hair. But she gave him no sign of recognition. He was very much in love, but not too much in love to see the absurdity of the situation. Fifty lily bulbs! She thought him mad, of course! Ah, well, so he was!

He tried to rouse himself to an interest in work-day problems. He had come to San Francisco to prove himself, to work, to win a place under another name. And what had he done? Fallen in love with a notorious, if not an infamous woman. The very waiters sneered at her under their servility. Rose Fanchon! Even if she had smiled on him, what could happen? Did he have money to squander on her? He half hoped, half dreaded, that her

indifference would cool him. To feel free again! But the merest suggestion of freedom laid an icy hand upon his heart.

On the eighth day, as he was seating himself with fresh despair at the dinner-table, the waiter, bustling up, said as he poured out water:

"Rose Fanchon's friend is back again. He is sitting at that table near the window with his family."

Jim Rod grew faint as he turned his eyes slowly toward the table indicated. A lean, swarthy man with black moustache was bending over a plate of soup. The waiter continued:

"His name is Rawlings. He is the richest man in town. He gambles—stocks, cards, dice, anything. All the city officials are under his thumb. . . . Only a year ago he killed a man for lifting his hat to Rose Fanchon at the races. It was presumably a duel. But it was plain murder, of course. He is a dead shot, and the man



"Rose Fanchon walked deliberately to his table and halted. He rose with a bow, and he heard her say distinctly:

"'Won't you come and see me to-night? I shall be at home until midnight.'"

he killed was still in his twenties. . . ."

Jim Rod turned his attention to the gambler's wife. She was a simpering little woman, colourless and quite devoid of charm. Her fingers were covered with rings and heavy gold ornaments clasped her wrists. "Does Mrs. Rawlings suspect?"

"She must. But that would make no difference. She adores him. Most women do." The waiter smiled.

At that moment Rose Fanchon entered the dining-room. She was very stately and pale. She had strung together a chain of lily blossoms and they encircled her throat. Rawlings did not lift his eyes from his plate.

The sight of the chain of flowers revived Jim Rod's hopes. She must have been cherishing his blossoms for a significant and culminating effect. And to have worn them, thus, on the night of Rawlings' return! He was elated and fearful in turn. Rose Fanchon's appearance had been earlier than usual. By the same token her departure was equally early.

Even before she had quite risen in her place Jim Rod had felt a tumult in his heart, a premonition as it were, of impending drama. He was not disappointed. Rose Fanchon walked deliberately to his table and halted. He rose with a bow, and he heard her say distinctly:

"Won't you come and see me to-night? I shall be at home until midnight."

She swept past and out, without waiting for his answer. He felt every eye in the room turned upon him as he sat down. He did not dare look in the direction of Rawlings' table. His waiter brought him the entrée and said under his breath:

"I hope you are a good shot, my son."

My strange guest halted his tale at this point. He gave a little sigh and spread sweet butter on a bit of crust. He ate the morsel slowly, gravely, as if he were trying to recapture a taste for luxuries that he had lost the capacity to enjoy. Sitting opposite him, I tried to reconstruct his youthful emotions. Had he been elated or timorous at the command of this Rose Fanchon forty years ago? What did a young blade of the seventies do when a woman so worried him in the dining-room of an hotel with all the guests for audience? He went forth right to that lady. As I learned as soon as Jim Rod had finished his crust of bread. Went to her with a mixture of insolence and conceit. Mr. Rawlings was a perfect shot. Well, it was something to be in a position to move such an adversary to an exhibition of his talents.

"I found her in her room," he went on, "surrounded by vases and bowls of every conceivable shape and size into which she had pressed the blooming lily bulbs that I had sent her. Upon tables, upon the mantel, upon shelves, in odd corners they gleamed through the half-lights, matching the strange ivory pallor of her skin and the gold of her tawny hair. Their perfume was overpowering. . . . She said to me: 'Most of my friends send me jewels.' That was all, just a simple statement, without another illuminating phrase. And yet I knew that she was pleased. I had no words for her. Her beauty choked me, somehow, and every emotion that I had ever experienced rose to the surface. I was at once in the seventh heaven of delight and moved by the profound despair of hell itself. She stood there with a fragile smile upon her lips while I continued to be stricken dumb until, presently, there came a sharp knock upon the door."

Jim Rod paused and smiled: after forty years that knock upon the door was a fact pregnant with irony. He had not so much as had time to find his voice before Rawlings was upon them. He came into the room, pistol in hand. Rose Fanchon darted towards him. There was a scuffle in which all three joined, a sharp report, and Rose Fanchon lay mortally wounded. Rawlings left the room at once.

Rawlings left the room at once. What a significant statement on which to pause! It made a further word picture of what immediately followed superfluous. What listener living could not build up the situation on this foundation? A young man, strange and alone in a mad city, deserted in such an hour. A young man who had come to build honour and fortune upon the ruins of past mistakes. Is it necessary to dwell upon the horror, the remorse, the hopelessness of his condition? . . . Rose Fanchon died before he could summon aid. He was arrested immediately and charged with murder. And almost at once it was conveyed to him through mysterious channels that he would do well not to mention the presence of Rawlings in Rose Fanchon's apartments on the night of the tragedy. Indeed, it might go very ill with him if he did. Rawlings was, as the waiter had said, a political power. To draw him in might

complicate the issue; but it would clear nobody; least of all a strange young man, driven to sudden insanity by Rose Fanchon's ivory beauty. Jim Rod saw the point perfectly—too perfectly, it seemed to me. For I cried out almost derisively:

"You let a scoundrel like that railroad you to jail! Why should either of you have feared the noose? A pistol discharged in a scuffle is certainly not murder. And according to your own admission, Rawlings had no reputation to lose. Even his wife was not ignorant of his life."

Jim Rod smiled that smile of his so full of irritating calm. "Rumour and conjecture concerning a man's habits is one thing—confirmation of them quite another. I have yet to see a blackguard with a love for court records. . . . But Rawlings' consistency is neither here nor there. He wished to stand clear of the situation, and stand clear he did."

"And what had you to gain by submitting?"

"A chance that his power might operate to save me."

"You mean he promised."

"There were intimations." Jim Rod shrugged. "At least I was not hanged."

I shook my head. "I do not understand," I said. "You were a young man of family, of influence. Your very antecedents should have given you a better break than that."

For the first time since our meeting Jim Rod looked severe. "I had abandoned my people for a lesser fault. It is not conceivable that I should reclaim them while I foundered in a mire."

"You mean to say——"

"I mean to say that the name I assumed when I left was Jim Rod. It was Jim Rod when they sent me to jail. It will be Jim Rod when they bury me."

"Then, your family do not know?"

"Don't be ridiculous!"

I sat back and stared at him. At that moment *he* seemed ridiculous. Certainly there is such a law as self-preservation!

Pastry with too much shortening. The phrase leapt up in my mind again. The tutors, prep. school, Harvard, apparently had done their worst.

I remember, as I sat there, watching Jim Rod crumble bits of crisp bread into his bowl of milk, that I felt a sort of sympathetic contempt for him. It seemed too incredible that refinement of conduct could go so far as to make any man give up his claim to life without a struggle. There was something immoral in such passivity, on a par with suicide. He must have realised after forty years how full of empty glory his gesture of immolation had been. Had he not said to me at the beginning of our talk that Youth was always full of heroic evasions? What a bitter thing to master one's lesson at the end of life itself? Far better to die in the full flush of self-satisfaction. He must have sensed my thoughts for he stopped as he fumbled for a spoon and looked searchingly at me. The sharp candour of his eyes made me drop mine.

"Well, well," I mumbled in embarrassment, "we live and learn."

"Some of us do," he replied, almost musingly.

My attitude of faint disdain must have communicated itself to Jim Rod. He rose to reach for his hat. I said:

"What's your hurry? Stay and finish your bread and milk."

He shook his head. "I've eaten enough, and besides, I must be about the business of hunting a job."

His tone had a faint trace of irony in it. "You didn't tell me about the job you lost," I answered.

He fell back in his seat again. "Ah, that will amuse you, too. . . ."

"What sort of a job was it?"

"In a hospital."

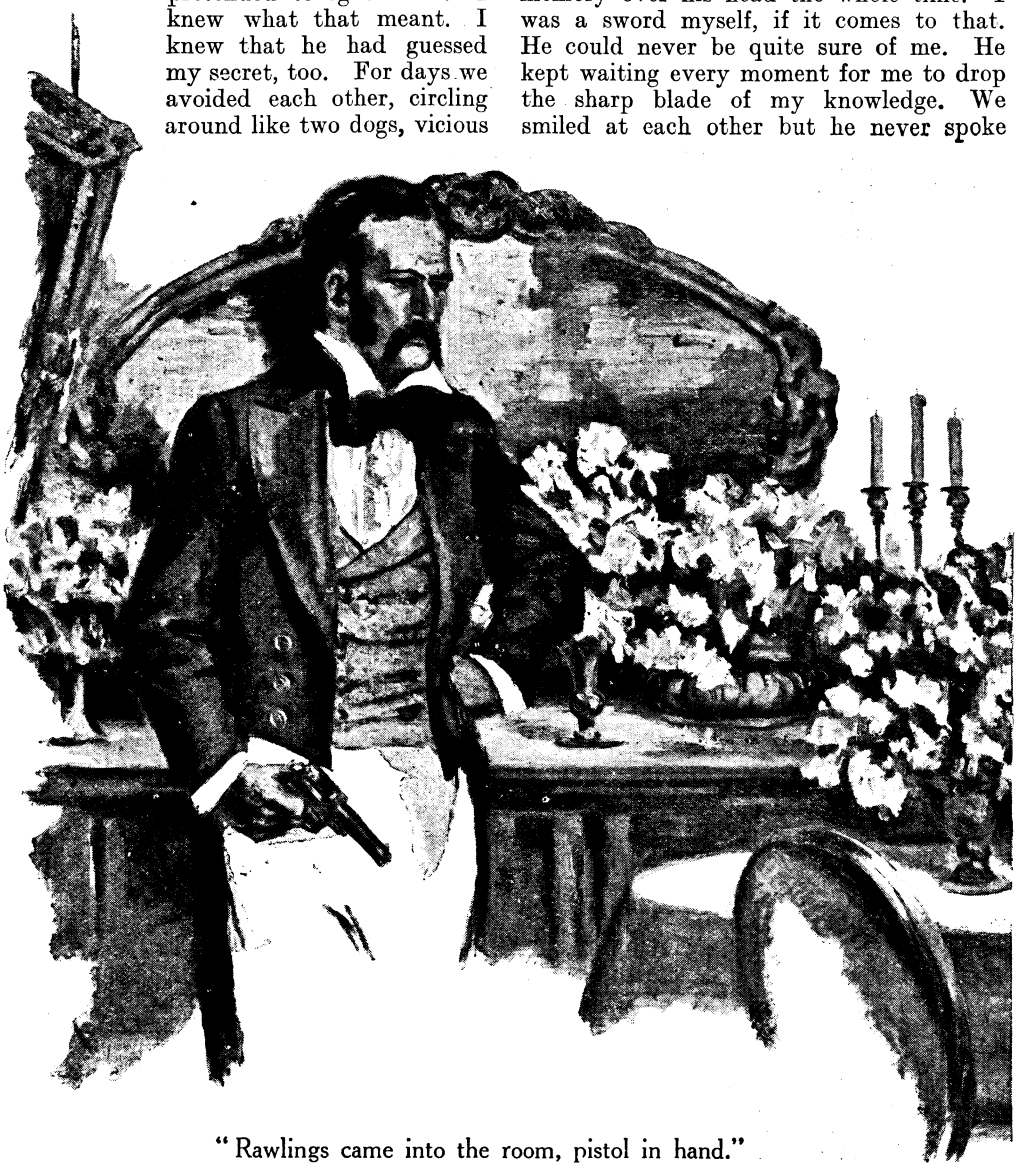
"How did you come to pick out a hospital job?"

"For ten years I had charge of sterilising surgical instruments in the prison. I learned other things, too, of value. . . . I passed St. Agnes Hospital one night soon after I had been released. I thought: Perhaps I can get something in there. I liked the look of it." He shot a twinkling glance at me. "It reminded me of the home I had lived in for forty years. . . . After forty years there are ties to bind you even to a prison. I had grown used to austerity. . . . They gave me a job, mopping up the halls. It was hard work for a man of my years. But I hung on. The head janitor was sick when they hired me, so I did not see him for about a week. He came in one morning as I was getting my pails of water ready. I gave him a single glance and I knew at once."

"Knew what?"

"That he had been in prison. There is the mirror of prison in every convict's eyes. He never loses that look. . . . He

pretended to ignore me. I knew what that meant. I knew that he had guessed my secret, too. For days we avoided each other, circling around like two dogs, vicious yet shy. Several times I was on the point of going up to him and saying: 'Don't be afraid! I shall say nothing.' But I couldn't bring myself to it. It was too much like currying favour. I thought: Let him say something first. . . . What a ridiculous thing pride is!"



"Rawlings came into the room, pistol in hand."

Prison for forty years . . . pride . . . It was laughable and tragic. Two souls rescued from hell.

"I knew he was bent on getting rid of me. . . . Why shouldn't he be? I reminded him of his past. I held the sword of memory over his head the whole time. I was a sword myself, if it comes to that. He could never be quite sure of me. He kept waiting every moment for me to drop the sharp blade of my knowledge. We smiled at each other but he never spoke to me. Not even to give me an order. Even if he had not had the look I should have known then. He was head janitor; it was his business to give me orders. One morning the matron sent for me. She said, 'Proll tells me that your work is too hard for you. He likes you enormously but he says you're too old for what you are doing. Didn't you once tell me that you had had hospital experience? . . . What can you do?' I told her. She dismissed me without any comment. Next morning she sent for me again. 'Rod, I'm going to make



"Rose Fanchon darted towards him."

a place for you in the surgical room. I'm going to let you show us how valuable you can be. And you'll have to prove very valuable, indeed. It isn't as if we really need you. But there's a quality about you I like. I always say that breeding tells.'

"I left her presence perfectly happy. Unwittingly Proll had done me a good turn. It seemed as if all my problems were solved. I had food, shelter, and a few dollars a month to call my own. I had contacts with my fellow-beings. I was to engage in obscure

yet worthy work. I would make a place for myself! Ah, my friend, you are too young to take delight in crumbs of comfort. At your age a man sits at the head of life's feast."

"What happened next?"

He shrugged. "Is it necessary to ask? . . . Proll was furious when he heard of the new plans. I think he had visions of me sneering at him in secret. He watched me more narrowly, more stealthily. I felt his eyes upon me even when I was not in his presence. He was like a prison trusty terrified that some incorrigible life-termer was plotting to spring upon him with a knife. I felt then that it was only a matter of time before he would tell the matron what he suspected."

"You should have gone to him," I cried impatiently, "and had it out. You should have said: 'I know all about your past, too. If you say anything about me, I'll squeal!'"

Rod gave me a glance of cool patience. "I'm not a blackmailer," he answered. I felt myself flushing. "There are certain things that simply aren't done."

His tone was eloquent with rebuke. "You mean there are certain things that simply *weren't* done!" I threw back at him; I was thinking of the tutor and prep. school and Harvard. "We don't split hairs these days. We fight for place and we keep on fighting to hold it."

"Proll was a mean, vindictive, timorous man. I couldn't bring myself to use *his* weapons."

"What did he finally do?"

"What I expected him to. He told the matron. She had the grace to send for me and give me a chance to refute his statements. He sat in a corner of the room glaring at me. His face was as white as a sheet and his fingers twitched when I came into the room. You see, he hadn't expected her to do this. He thought she merely would take his tip and find some excuse for letting me out. She said: 'Rod, Proll tells me you're an ex-convict. I'm sure it isn't true.' I looked at Proll. 'How does he know?' I asked. She turned and looked at him also. He was deathly pale and his lips began to move silently. Suddenly I thought, 'Why torture him?' So I withdrew my glance and said, 'It's quite true. I learned all I know about hospital work in prison.' I didn't give them a chance to say anything further. I rose and left the room. Proll followed me out. In a dark corner of the corridor I felt his hand upon my shoulder. I turned. 'I'm sorry,' he whispered. 'I thought some day you might tell. . . . I have a wife and child and a home.' 'It's all right,' I said. He put out his hand."

"And you took it?" I broke in.

He shook his head. "I shake hands only with my equals," he answered blandly.

I leaned forward and gazed into the clear depths of his unconquered eyes. "Good God," I cried, "but you are magnificent!"

He rose in his seat again and put on his hat. I continued to sit and stare at him. I did not offer him money or assistance.

"Good night," he said simply.

"Good night," I answered.

I heard the door of the restaurant open and close. The rain was still coming down in a cold fury. I wanted to rush after him and call him back. But instead I sat there shivering, and suddenly I remembered that I had not offered him my hand.

SPRING IN THE CITY.

"VIOLETS! Sweet violets!" the city hawkers cry
And offer their dark blossoms to the crowds that hurry by,
But O! they tug the heart-strings of a dreamer such as I.

"Violets! Sweet violets!" Ah! how they call to mind
The sunny glades of Hainault and the soft voice of the wind,
In days before my lady proved ungracious and unkind.

"Violets! Sweet violets!" The merle and mavis sing
Along the city highways, and mine eyes the salt tears sting
With new awakened grieving that the purple blossoms bring.

LAURANCE M. WULCKO.

THE BEGGING BOWL

By JOAN SUTHERLAND

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

THE terrific heat of mid-afternoon lay over the little cantonment of Khaili Khan, tucked away at the foot of the bare hills that lead by stony arid stretches to the majestic heights of the Hindu Kush. The parade-ground was deserted save for a sentry or two, the barracks were equally without sign of life, and the bungalows close to the barracks seemed to slumber in the blaze. On the edge of the native quarters was life astir, however, in the person of a tall lithe figure in the ragged clothes of a beggar, bearded, bronzed, and none too clean, sitting under the wall of a house with the little bowl of his kind before him.

Despite the grime and dishevelment of his person, he possessed some claim to good looks, for he was of the North, and his features had the clean-cut stamp of the Border, aquiline and powerful, and his carriage was by no means compatible with his profession.

The house behind him showed blank walls rising to a good height, slit by a narrow window or two some fifteen or twenty feet up, and was at the junction of two roads on the very edge of the native quarter and not far from the barracks, for in this Border fort there was no outlying building, no straggling across the stony slopes of the foothills. The tribesmen were always ready to take advantage of carelessness, and the detachment of Khyber Rifles with their keen-eyed bronzed officers were always alert and ready.

Ramadur Khan shifted his position a little under the wall, taking advantage of the narrow strip of shade, and he had just settled back again in the dust when a sound caught his ear, a sound that came from the house behind.

He gave no sign, had anyone been looking, that he had heard anything amiss, but his muscles stiffened and behind the wild-falling hair his eyes dilated. The sound, almost inaudible, came again, a muffled sobbing, restrained and all the more pitiful for that restraint, in a woman's voice.

A pariah dog came sneaking along the street. Ramadur Khan watched it even as he listened and the dog paused near him, irresolute, frightened, yet with the half-expectant air of one not wholly used to ill-treatment in this particular quarter. From beneath some fold of his rags Ramadur Khan flung him a crust, then relapsed once more into immobility, and the dog, munching, ran off.

It was an hour later and the fiercest heat of the day was passing when a native trooper brought two horses to the door of the bungalow. A minute or two later two people came out, a man in drill uniform, of middle height and age, with blue eyes set too close together and a slightly underhung too-narrow jaw, and a girl of about one-and-twenty, wearing well-cut but shabby riding clothes, and moving with the listless air of weariness.

Ramadur Khan made his appeal for alms, to be rewarded by a curse from the man and a look, pitying and kindly, from his companion; she was slender, attractive despite the exhaustion that the heat and something more subtly destructive had wrought in her, fair, grey-eyed, pitifully young, and it was not difficult for Ramadur Khan's keen eyes to see who had been sobbing so pitifully a little while ago.

Just as they were about to mount the man turned back and spoke to him.

"I've told you before to get out," he said angrily. "You'd better do it if you value your skin. I won't have filthy beggars like

you hanging about my house. Get off now!"

Ramadur Khan arose with dignity despite his rags, but the girl as he moved away hung behind a second to say in a soft undertone:

"I am so sorry——" forgetful in her swift pity for the unfortunate, that he would not understand English.

But if the language of words was strange, the language of kindliness was not, and Ramadur Khan salaamed and met her eyes in a long straight look that held understanding and, amazingly, protectiveness; a look which blazed into sudden anger as the Englishman caught the girl by the wrist.

"So even when I tell a foul vermin like that to clear off, you must go against me, must you?" he said savagely. "Get on your horse and stop this maudlin nonsense."

Sonia Harland mounted in silence; she had learned very quickly that silence was the best refuge when her husband indulged in his frequent outbursts of temper. Her marriage, arranged by a mother who wished to have a young and lovely rival out of the way, had from the very first been a nightmare of misery. James Harland was a Major in the —th Horse, a native regiment; he was well-off, and popular in clubs on account of his prowess in sport. But as the husband of a sensitive tender-hearted girl he was a tragedy: coarse, bullying, very nearly physically cruel. And Sonia, in a strange country, rather shy of her new surroundings, made the mistake of showing she was afraid of his tongue and his temper, instead of standing up to both.

The Colonel was a kindly man who did not altogether like his senior major, but he was shy and a bachelor and he had no idea of the scenes that went on behind the high blind walls of the Harland bungalow; no one had, except the native servants and the Pathan beggar standing now a few yards away from the house.

He watched the two out of sight now, with narrowed gaze that was as keen and steady as a hawk's, then took his departure along the dusty road into the depths of the crowded little mud-walled bazaar, where in some haunt of his fellows he took his frugal evening meal and smoked his pipe at ease.

Meanwhile Sonia, riding along the stony road by her husband's side, thought how desolate the hills looked this evening, and realised that unless they turned back soon she was going to collapse on her mare's neck with heat and weariness.

She ventured to suggest a return after a little, whereupon Harland reined in with vicious suddenness.

"Good Lord, what's the matter now?" he demanded. "Can't you do anything? Pleasant companion you are for a man, I must say."

Sonia's grey eyes, dulled with fatigue, met his.

"I said I was too tired to ride," she said wearily. "It's the heat, I suppose."

"No worse for you, is it, than for anybody else? How about me sweating all day in this blasted sun? D'you think I don't feel it? D'you think I'm not tired? If you said you were lazy I'd be more likely to believe it."

His tone was more objectionable than his words, and a spark of resentment flared up in Sonia.

"Need you publish your opinion of me quite so loudly before two of your men?" she demanded. "It doesn't make things easier."

His reply was a volley of anger, and, shrinking from it, she kept silence; but when they returned and she slipped, dizzy and exhausted, from her saddle, she felt a little pang of mingled relief and dismay at Ramadur Khan's empty place. Relief since he would not be again subjected to her husband's brutal abuse; dismay because, oddly enough, she had liked to know he was there. His presence, beggar as he was, had seemed to be somehow a protection.

She puzzled over this idea as she bathed and dressed; he had looked so strong and fit, despite his rags and dirt, so unfitted for the lazy life of a beggar; it was curious that such contented him, yet of course these Eastern men were so different from those of the West, and begging could be quite an honoured profession—witness the lamas of the far North and some of the Buddhist priests.

She dined alone, but, contrary to his custom, Harland came in early from Mess and seemed in an unusually good temper after the storm of the afternoon. He sat looking through the papers that had arrived from home the day before, making a few casual remarks, and then suddenly threw aside one and spoke abruptly.

"Sonia, I don't wish you to ride outside the cantonments for the next few days. You'd better get some tennis instead."

"Not ride?" Sonia looked up in some surprise. "Why? Anything wrong?"

"No. Oh, no. But the tribes are rest-



"The girl hung behind a second to say in a soft undertone: 'I am so sorry——' forgetful in her swift pity that he would not understand English."

less. Word came in to-day from one of our men who has been over the Border scouting. It seems there's some damned old Mullah making trouble."

"Fighting? There may be fighting?"

"Possibly. A flying column is to be kept in readiness. Anyhow, mind what I say."

"Very well," Sonia said indifferently; she knew nothing more would be told her, and the news made but little variation in the monotony of life. There had been trouble before—it lurked always amidst those arid, stony hills. The result was always the same. A column, bridles jingling, guns lumbering over the stones, the feet of marching men or the tramp of horses' hoofs; the garrison left behind cursing and bored, and in a week or a day or two, or perhaps a fortnight, the return of the same column, a few men missing, a few horses, some feverish casualties borne on stretchers or—if practicable—in an ambulance, and armed quiet settling once more upon Khaili Khan, mud-coloured in the sun.

So she troubled little during the next day or two, playing tennis for necessary exercise on the not-too-bad hard-mud court, and oddly missing Ramadur Khan's presence outside the walls of her house. The third day one of the subalterns, a boy named Saltoun, with whom she often played singles, did not turn up, but in his place came a tall, broad-shouldered young man, several years older, who came to her where she read Saltoun's note of apology and explanation and introduced himself.

"Mrs. Harland, I'm Garry Hawkes. Saltoun has introduced me in that note, I believe, and explained that he's on duty. May I have the pleasure of taking his place?"

Sonia looked up and met the gaze of a pair of piercingly keen grey eyes set in a bronzed face distinctly good to look at; for a second she stared, unanswering, because something about those eyes seemed curiously familiar. Then she smiled and held out her hand.

"Why, of course! How d'you do? My husband was speaking about you the other day. You've been among the tribes, haven't you?"

"On and off," he admitted. "Your husband has very kindly asked me to dine to-night, but perhaps it's inconvenient? Will you be frank and tell me?"

For some reason or other the news sounded most agreeable; Sonia smiled again and began to walk towards the net.

"Absolutely convenient. I am very pleased," she said. "Will you tell me about your trip? What can be told, I mean. I have always wanted to cross those hills."

"Perhaps you will some day. Things will quiet down again, you know. Have you ever been up in Kashmir?"

"No. Never." Her voice was full of longing. "I hear it's wonderful."

"Unbelievably lovely. You should get Harland to take you."

At the mention of her husband Sonia's smile faded; there was the slightest hesitation in her manner as she answered and then rather quickly changed the subject.

"Shall we play? Rough or smooth?"

They played four sets, which tried her skill and speed to the utmost, then prepared to walk back together, meeting Harland on the way. Ramadur Khan's place was still empty, and as they passed Harland spoke of the man and later at dinner answered Hawkes's question as to the reference.

"That fella understood I meant business," he said half jocularly, and at Hawkes's question: "A filthy beggar who chose my wall as a resting-place day and night. I warned him two or three times, and the last time he took himself off."

"They are tiresome fellows," Hawkes said carelessly. "Was he one of the priests?"

"No. Just an ordinary wastrel. If I catch him here again I'll give him something to remember me by."

"He's probably miles away by now," Hawkes said. "They're odd, these wandering beggars—cover half India sometimes."

"He wasn't so bad," Sonia exclaimed, suddenly impelled to defend the absent Ramadur Khan. "He was never offensive, James. And he brought back my cat when he ran away, and I've always been grateful."

"Sentimental, you mean!" Harland interjected. "Trust a woman for that. Besides, he's a hell of a big chap and handsome after a fashion, despite his filth and rags. Trust a woman to see that too. If he were a hunchback Sonia'd have forgotten her gratitude by now."

The bad taste of the remark held them both speechless for a moment, then Hawkes rather abruptly turned to his hostess.

"You were saying this afternoon you'd never been to Kashmir," he said. "You really should get there somehow. Gulmarg is a heaven on earth for beauty. I suppose you know it, Harland?"

"Oh, yes, I know it," Harland said, smiling a little behind shut teeth—he had been quite

well aware of the snub—" but Sonia married a poor man of her own free will. Kashmir isn't for us these days."

" That's a pity," Hawkes said quietly. " But still there's plenty of time. Once there it need not be too expensive for leave."

" Not for you, perhaps. You're a rich man's son."

Again Sonia felt the hot blood run up under her skin—was James trying to be offensive ? But Hawkes was equal to more difficult moments than this.

" Not so very rich," he said carelessly. " These days one must be a millionaire to earn that label."

Harland laughed.

" Oh, well—compared to paupers like ourselves. By the way, any more news of the trouble ? "

Garry Hawkes's grey eyes shot a glance at Sonia and Harland laughed again, this time in a rather ugly fashion.

" Oh, I told her there was likely to be a scrap. I don't believe in women being wrapped up in cotton-wool."

" I don't want to be wrapped up in cotton-wool ! " Sonia said, in a sudden little flare of unreasoning anger. " Who does, these days ? "

" Well—what of it ? " Harland ignored her remark and Hawkes had perforce to do the same.

" I think we are as well prepared," he said after a minute. " The Mullah Abdul Amir is preaching one of his crusades. It'll end in a scrap of sorts, I expect."

" Hope to Heaven it does ! " Harland exclaimed. " I'm sick of doin' nothing."

" Oh, you'll get some practice in your art before long," Hawkes assured him, but later, when Sonia had gone to the drawing-room, he changed his tone.

" Look here, Harland," he said, " I didn't want to say too much in front of your wife, but there's likely to be a big flare-up. The Colonel told me that he's urging all the women who can to go to the Fort at Akban. This place is no spot for them if we are likely to be besieged. And old Abdul is as wily as a serpent. What about Mrs. Harland ? We could make arrangements for her to travel with Major Delafield's wife and children, if she could start to-morrow."

" To-morrow ? Trouble expected so soon as that ? You're joking ! "

" I assure you I'm not ! What about it ? "

Harland was silent a moment, then he asked a brief question.

" Doctor's wife going ? "

" No. She won't leave him. Says she's seen worse than this is likely to be."

" Then I fail to see the need to send Sonia. If it's safe for one woman it's safe for another."

It was Hawkes's turn to be silent for a moment. Then :

" There's a good deal of difference in their ages, Harland," he said.

Harland, smoking his cigar with savage irritability, struck his hand on the table.

" A wife's place is with her husband. I'm not going to have Sonia careering over the country with Mrs. Delafield. Pretty pair they'd make. No. She stays here. She knew what the Border was like when she married me."

" Did she ? " Hawkes said indifferently, but behind his hard grey eyes his brain added : " And did she know what you were like, you ill-bred swine ? " Aloud he only remarked that nothing might happen after all.

When they joined Sonia a little later Harland repeated part of the conversation, as if Hawkes's suggestion had been a rather ridiculous jest, and Sonia looked across at the tall, lithe figure on the other side of the room.

" It was kind of you to offer to arrange my journey," she said gently. " But you see it won't be necessary." Then, as he came across the room and held out his hand, she added : " You're not going yet ? " in a tone of genuine regret.

" I'm afraid I must. I've a lot of work to-night," he said gently. " Perhaps we may be able to play tennis again to-morrow ? I hope so. Good night, and thank you."

She liked the warm, firm grip of his hand, and as he accompanied Harland from the room she watched him with a touch of depression. What would it be like, she wondered, if it were James who had bidden her good night, James who was leaving, and Garry Hawkes who was coming back to stay with and protect her ? At the thought she laughed, a bitter, mirthless little laugh, and ran her fingers through her short bright hair. How James would shout with crude amusement at the idea of her desiring protection ! How he would ask her if she were in love with this new-comer—in love—well, was she ?

It was not until she was alone in her room one evening later in the week that she tried again to disentangle her thoughts, sitting wrapped in a thin dressing-gown in place of her frock, facing facts as she had not faced

them for long enough. She had had plenty of time. James had not yet returned and it was one o'clock . . . what was Garry Hawkes doing now? . . . working? . . . He was a Political Officer, that she knew, and he was a man that she had at once trusted and liked.

Rather wearily, she prepared for bed, then started and stood listening, for in the quiet of the night she heard a curious little cough from the street below . . . a cough she knew. Ramadur Khan had returned!

For a moment she waited, then with feverish haste slipped into shoes and a big coat; he was only a beggar, but he had done her a kind action, and if James found him there when he came back she knew what would happen . . . she knew, too, the state James would be in, heedless of everything but his own drink-inflamed desire for trouble.

It took but a minute to slip the bolts, to step over the threshold and run noiselessly along the verandah to the end wall of the bungalow where it abutted directly on the road. She could lean over the low mud wall there and warn him. But before she had taken half a dozen steps she halted, for from the western outskirts of the village came the sharp report of a rifle, followed by another and another, and almost at the same instant points of flame burned up at intervals along the chain of the foothills. No need to tell her what they were—bonfires to start



"She heard a muttered curse from her companion, and almost at the instant a bullet tore past her, so closely that she felt its wind."

the fighting that would flare along the Frontier. For a moment she forgot everything but the drama of the moment. The hot dark night, the lights ominously hidden in the native quarter, the sound of running footsteps down a narrow lane, a bugle-call, clear and sharp like a sword blade in the silence.



From the direction of the barracks where the depleted garrison was rushing to posts came rapid firing, yells and cries. . . . In the roadway not a hundred yards from the bungalow she saw a group of men waving torches and weapons, yelling for the blood of the infidels . . . big bearded men from beyond the Frontier rushing the Delafields' bungalow . . . saw a Pathan rush out as they approached . . . the khansamah belonging to the household . . . saw him cut down. . . . Released by the horror from the spell that had bound her motionless, hardly realising what she did, Sonia climbed the low wall and dropped to the roadway below

Within the house there was certain death. Out there in the open there was the faintest hope that she might by tortuous ways reach the Fort, if safety were to be found there. . . . Even as she alighted, a hand with a grip of steel caught her wrist, another was clapped over her mouth, stifling her cry, and she was caught up against a ragged cloak, with bare arms about her, and her captor was running bent down, carrying her with almost superhuman strength.

Dazed, helpless, she yet retained enough sense not to impede or hinder by question or struggle. For all she knew she was being carried into a hideous captivity, but the alternative was a certainty of death. . . . The native who held her was a man of powerful physique, but his breath was coming in gasps and he was beginning to labour as he ran. Behind them the bazaar was ablaze, the night hideous with flames and cries and the ceaseless rattle of rifle fire, ahead was darkness and the open. Sonia put up a hand and felt a coarse beard, and suddenly the man stopped and spoke in English.

"Thank God!—get on the horse!" She

realised that a bridle was being put into her nerveless fingers, that out of the gloom two horses had materialised, tethered to a tree, that her captor had almost flung her into the saddle and was himself mounted at her side—Ramadur Khan, dirty, ragged, who had saved her!

"Where are we going?—who are you?" She panted out the questions as they galloped and he answered with curt brevity.

"Fort Akban. Don't talk. We've ten miles of the worst going on the Border."

Utterly confused, she obeyed him; that lurid light from the burning bazaar had shown her Ramadur Khan's features, yet the words were English, the tone no tone of a beggar, even a beggar of the proud and fighting North. . . . The whole affair had been so sudden, so amazing, that it partook of the unreal; she realised the danger, yet it was so spectacular that she hardly feared it . . . the horse's steady gallop was easy, and now that her eyes were accustomed to the night, it was not so dark as she had imagined. Suddenly Ramadur Khan's hand shot out and grasped her bridle, pulling up her horse with a jerk that threw him on his haunches, and such was the strangeness of the night that she did not cry or even exclaim, but watched him apprehensively as he listened, his head bent, his eye narrowed. To her came no sound, but to him something was audible, for he wheeled the horses at right angles and spoke below his breath.

"Sit tight. They're on our tracks."

It seemed strange to her even then that in the midst of such fighting and loot any of the raiders should trouble to follow them—an insignificant white girl and a Pathan beggar—on the road to Fort Akban, but she had no means of knowing the truth. Perhaps this man was carrying her off to unknown horrors, but the horrors from which for the time being he had saved her were concrete and those of the future problematical. And what followed made questioning well-nigh impossible, for she needed all her skill to keep her saddle, all her breath in that headlong flight. Suddenly above them, as if fighting for the raiders, the clouds that had, unnoticed, been thinning, broke, and the moon, full and brilliant, sailed out into a great stretch of clear sky.

She heard a muttered curse from her companion, and almost at the instant, with a rip and a singing whistle, a bullet tore past her, so closely that she felt its wind and the report rang out startlingly near.

Before them was a nullah and they swung into it over stones and sand, deeper and deeper, till at a corner where a rock jutted out Ramadur Khan pulled up.

"Get behind the rock!" he commanded, and, wheeling their horses, he gave her his bridle and himself crawled out on a ledge. Breathlessly she watched him, heard, coming along the stony bed of the nullah, horses so near that every second she expected to see their pursuers. Then she saw the moonlight glint on a revolver barrel in Ramadur Khan's hand; two shots rang out, then another, and he shifted the heavy Colt from his right hand to his left and fired again. The hoofs stopped, then clattered violently, and she knew that riderless horses were galloping up the nullah.

The next moment Ramadur Khan was back in his saddle and holding out the Colt to her.

"If I show you, can you load this for me?" he said. "I can't do it with one hand."

She took it with a quick exclamation of pity, for his right hand hung helplessly, and the blood was pouring from his wrist.

"Oh, you're hurt—your wrist! Yes, I can load it——"

She obeyed his curt instructions, then, fumbling under her coat, tore a strip from the thin white silk of her slip and took hold of his arm.

"Let me bind it up—we must stop the bleeding," she said. "I can't do more——"

"They've only winged me," he said between set teeth. "It's nothing——" But she knew better, for the bullet had smashed the wrist-bone and he must be suffering agony. Somehow she bound the fore-arm and then looked up sharply from her impromptu bandaging.

"It mustn't hang down—at least I know that much—your turban—a sling——"

She knew even as she spoke the Pathan's dislike of being seen without his turban, and now at the suggestion he slipped the revolver back into his broad belt and drew a knife to cut off a strip of his rags.

"Sorry to ask you to touch this," he said. "Hitch it up—yes, that's it—I think we've shaken those devils off, but we'll take no chances. You're all right?"

"Yes—but you—you talk English—you——?"

Despite the burning agony that was searing his arm, he laughed.

"I thought for the moment you recognised me on Tuesday——"

"Tuesday? Tuesday? You—you're—not——"

"Garry Hawkes . . . very much at your service . . . do you mind if we leave the rest till we get to the Fort? I—I'd feel easier when I get you there——"

She guided her willing, tired horse up the stony watercourse without another word till they came out by a narrow climbing track up its side to the plains, and there, not a mile away, rose the great bastions of Fort Akban, and along the road a troop of cavalry were moving at a swift trot. . . .

. . . . . .

It was two days later, after hours of slumber, when she saw him next. He was lying back in a chair, with his arm swathed in bandages, his face the face of Garry Hawkes, but the height and build and the keen eyes, the eyes, of Ramadur Khan. He smiled when he saw her and tried to rise, but she pushed him gently back.

"You ought to be in bed—the surgeon said so; but he also said you refused. You—oh, does it hurt very badly?"

The formal words broke down in a little tender cry as she saw the lines of pain in his drawn face. At the change in her voice he smiled for a second and held out his good hand.

"Not unbearably. Nothing for you to be troubled about. You—you've heard the news from Khaili Khan?"

Her own smile faded.

"Yes. I—I can't pretend to be sorry. I'm not. I wish it could have never been at all—any of it—but I can't pretend I'm grieving. You—do you think it's very wicked of me?"

She felt the grasp of his hand, firm and strong and comforting, as she had felt it for the first time less than a week ago.

"No, dear," he said very gently. "He died bravely. You can be glad for that. And for the other—you must try to forget—I know you've forgiven——"

She nodded.

"Yes. At once. He didn't understand—ever. I expect it was partly my fault. If I'd not let him see I was frightened of his rages he'd probably have been different—but I was. And he——"

She broke off suddenly, hesitated, then looked at him questioningly.

"You were there—on secret service—I realise that. But my house—was it because you knew that you chose that corner to sit and beg so often?"

"Knew what?"

"That I was—frightened?"

He tightened his grasp of her fingers.

"At the beginning—yes."

"And—afterwards?"

She did not withdraw her hand, and although movement hurt him he managed to draw himself nearer.

"Afterwards," he said a little unsteadily, "afterwards there was another reason . . . and very soon I shall tell you what it was . . . unless you guess first . . . Sonia. . . ."

SPRING-SONG

SING of wind and rain,
For March is blowing along the lane;
The clouds are flying,
And Winter's dying,
Dying.

Sing of sun and showers,
For April comes from her dewy bowers;
The clouds are breaking,
And earth is waking,
Waking.

Sing of joyous hours,
For May is dancing among the flowers;
List the bees' glad humming!
Fair June is coming,
Coming!

W. LESLIE NICHOLLS.

SIR GALAHAD

By VALENTINE

Author of "One Good Turn," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY WILMOT LUNT

HE had always, even from his earliest days, been known as "Gally," which, as any of his friends would have told you, was an affectionate abbreviation of Sir Galahad. Exactly how and when it had originated no one was quite sure. Nor did anyone really care. At thirty it seemed to fit him so well that everyone was perfectly certain that it must have always fitted him. People argued—not without reason—that the man who goes out of his way to shoulder other people's troubles, and who persistently declines to help himself at the expense of anybody else, is sufficiently unusual to carry an unusual name.

It was these two traits that had earned John Cavendish Smith his soubriquet. Yet in all other respects he was an entirely normal young man, possessing all those decent little vices that endear man to man—and invariably to woman. Nature, too, had not dealt unkindly with him. For he was big and strong, wholesomely tanned, with dark curly hair, and just ugly enough to attract notice. Yet the moment he smiled you forgot all about the ugliness. If you were a dog you wagged your tail. If you were a girl you felt you could give him both hands—and he wouldn't hold them a second longer than you wished him to. Girls appreciate that these days. It's so unusual.

Actually fortune—capricious little jade—had not been too kind to John Cavendish Smith. She had hauled him out of bed at four o'clock one winter's morning to rush to his father, whom he worshipped, suddenly stricken with a heart attack . . . landed him at his home ten minutes after death had laid its icy fingers . . .

On top of that the news that for years his father had been living hopelessly beyond his means, and he, Smith Junior, had no longer a brilliant career in front of him, but was entirely penniless. It shook him, of course. It was bound to. But he took it quietly enough—almost too quietly. He had a certain flair for writing, and quite a lot of determination. So he drifted into Fleet Street and for twelve years met with all the ups and downs—chiefly downs—which few can give so successfully as Fleet Street. For John Cavendish Smith was by no means a genius. He was just a good sound writer, amazingly conscientious and extraordinarily painstaking. Which two qualities, allied to an unfailing penchant for helping innumerable lame dogs over stiles, certainly do not make either for success or big bank balances.

So it came about that at the age of thirty John Cavendish Smith still inhabited two little rooms in a quiet street in Bloomsbury, the larger of which—or rather the less small—was his study, while the other—a kind of glorified cupboard—was his bedroom.

A queer room that study, eminently typical of the man. Every available inch of space taken up. Stacks of well-worn books, a big paper-littered table, half a dozen old briars in a rack by the fireplace, a few excellent prints on the walls. A treasured dark-blue-bladed oar over the mantelpiece, half a dozen silver cups on the mantelpiece, fishing rods, a couple of guns, golf clubs and tennis racquets in the corner. Photos of men stuck about everywhere . . . yet never a girl's! Everything strong and firm and solid and essentially manly . . . like John Cavendish Smith himself!

To-day, however, shirt-sleeved, pipe between his teeth, sitting at his table, he was smiling and chuckling broadly as he studied a letter in front of him, which,

coupled with the fact that for the last half-hour he had made no attempt to write, would have suggested in a moment to anyone who knew him that something unusual had happened.

It had.

This letter spelt the success for which John Cavendish Smith had waited and worked for twelve years. It meant that for the first time during that period he would be able to say, "I can see myself with a decent bank balance for the next twelve months." Which to a man who has never been able to see it with the smallest degree of certainty for even twelve weeks, is an amazing and unbelievable happening.

It certainly was a pleasant letter, though only John Cavendish Smith, struggling author for twelve long years, could realise exactly how pleasant it was. It was from a well-known film company—incidentally the twelfth to whom he had offered his last book. It stated that after careful consideration they had come to the conclusion that the book would make a good film proposition. They went on to say that they were not prepared to give the price he had asked, seven hundred and fifty pounds, but that if Mr. Smith were willing to come down and discuss the matter with them they thought perhaps, etc., etc.

Therefore Mr. Smith, who had from the start been perfectly ready to accept five hundred if necessary, was smiling broadly. For his present bank balance stood at seventy-five pounds, with every prospect of being decreased in the near future and scarcely the same prospects of being increased.

For the next half-hour he sat smoking and building pleasant castles in the air. It struck him forcibly for the first time, that six years *was* a long period to go without a holiday of any sort.

He reached for an A B C and allowed the dream to expand. . . .

Now the greatest happenings of our lives often hinge on the most trivial circumstances. That morning it came about that a Scotch accountant, who should have known better, so far forgot all the first principles instilled into him at an early age by an Aberdonian father and mother as to leave his daily paper on a table of the Myrtle Restaurant where he had been lunching. True, he remembered this grave dereliction of duty on reaching his office a quarter of an hour later, and had he been his own master he would undoubtedly have gone back for the paper. Unfortunately he was not. Besides, he had grave doubts as to whether his employer, who was of English extraction, held the same views on economy as himself. So reluctantly he let it go. That was how John Cavendish Smith came to pick the newspaper up when he entered the restaurant and sat at the table that the gentleman of figure juggling had just vacated. And that was how he came to see the advertisement. . . .

It was an unusual advertisement. It was its unusualness that caught our man's attention and held it. For like turns instinctively to like.

"A young girl in society earnestly requests loan of seventy pounds for six months. Desperately urgent."

John Cavendish Smith reading it frowned slightly. The "Sir Galahad" that lay beneath that bronzed clean-shaven exterior was a little worried. The "earnestly" and "desperately" touched a tragic note. He had known both words so well, and now, with everything smooth and fair before him, it seemed a little unfair that——

He finished his lunch and walked back to his tiny rooms, but he couldn't shake off that advertisement. He had by this time built up a dream picture of some lovely wistful little maiden in deep distress. The accident of the paper lying on the table had become a direct command from providence. He had always been called Sir Galahad, and now he—with wealth in his pocket—was deliberately turning away from——

He snatched a sheet of paper and wrote:

77 Great Wilton Street,
Bloomsbury.

Maybe I can help you. At any rate, will you meet me and we can talk it over. Believe me, you can trust me implicitly. I have known trouble myself, so I can always sympathise with others similarly placed.

John Cavendish Smith.

As he dropped the note in the pillar-box ten minutes later he felt a queer thrill of delight.

"Now I've *got* to see it through," he said.

John Cavendish Smith walked up and down that part of Charing Cross Station that lies immediately opposite the bookstall feeling a little as he used to feel when his house-master had suddenly sent for him.

For he had had a letter, a letter on powder-blue notepaper bearing a well-known Mayfair address. It was just such a letter as any Sir Galahad might be thrilled to receive. For the writing was youthfully large and even more youthfully impulsive in its language. It had thanked him overwhelmingly. It had marvelled at him unstintingly. It had seemed to suggest that the writer could never summon up courage to meet him—and had named five o'clock on the next day at Charing Cross Station.

"If I can pluck up sufficient courage to come, I shall be wearing pale grey and a big bunch of Parma violets."

And her name was Rosamund Harcourt. . . .

Smith glanced at the clock. It was already five minutes past five and he found himself vaguely wondering—knowing nothing of the ways of women—whether Rosamund Harcourt had not failed to find the necessary courage. It struck him for the first time that pale grey as well as Parma violets seemed to be amazingly popular among young women that season.

Then suddenly he saw her, and because he was Sir Galahad his heart missed two separate and distinct beats, for if he had been asked his opinion as he gazed, he would have said that, compared with her, Helen of Troy, Haidée, Cleopatra, and Greta Garbo were merely a bunch of golliwogs.

She was all in pale grey, from little cloche hat to slim silk-clad legs and suède shoes. That, and the Parma violets and the anxious air with which she kept on glancing at the clock and then around her, made Smith sure beyond all manner of doubt that she was his Rosamund. Yet he kept telling himself that it couldn't be true. He had seen such girls in the pages of magazines. He never knew they existed in real life. . . .

She was not ten feet from him, and although scarcely thirty seconds elapsed before she turned and saw him, he could have passed an examination on her and never lost a mark. In those few seconds every detail was engraved on his brain for all time, and an amazed wonder crept over him as to how he had lived thirty years and yet never known till that moment that little angels walked this earth.

Then she turned and their eyes met. He saw her give a tiny start, but it was Sir Galahad and not John Cavendish Smith who came forward, hat in hand.

"Forgive me, please! It *is* Miss Harcourt, isn't it?"

She nodded mutely. Her big blue eyes—like harebell, she told himself, with the morning dew on them—seemed frightened, almost contrite. It struck him she was almost afraid to trust her voice. It was that which gave him the requisite courage—that and her slender girlishness. The protective instinct rose in him in a moment. His namesake, in fact all the knights of the Round Table, including King Arthur, had nothing on him now.

"Don't you think if you come and have tea with me—I know a nice quiet place near here—we shall find it easier? You can tell me all about it then. And please don't feel at all nervous with me—I'm not a bit formidable really. I've been in dozens of holes myself before now and I can sympathise. You don't know how frightfully glad I am you've turned up."

She shot him a grateful glance.

"I—I expected you to be old and with a beard." Her voice reminded Smith of the rippling of a Devonshire brook. "I—I'm glad you're not. I don't know what you must think of me, but——"

"Actually," lied Smith bravely, "I've often thought of doing the same thing myself when I've been hard up. I think it was jolly sporting of you."

Over tea she told him the story. It was quite an old one—though not to Smith. It centred round a game of poker, success at the start, a certain recklessness, the luck turning and a desperate effort to retrieve losses. It finished with a comparative stranger who paid said losses, protesting that such an act was a mere nothing . . . and then proceeded to use a little thoughtful blackmail. A man of the world might perhaps have found certain tiny flaws in the story, but Sir Galahad would have called out any man who suggested such a thing. And long before the story came to an end, John Cavendish Smith had made up his mind.

"If my father were to hear a word of it——" concluded the girl, but Smith cut her short.

"He mustn't," he said firmly. "You must let me advance you the money and pay this man off. Incidentally, I'm a bachelor and it's nothing to me."

"Oh, I don't see how I can. It's such a big sum."

"Not really big for me, I'm glad to say—now," he smiled . . . and told her about

his new film and the fat cheque accruing therefrom.

For some moments she was very quiet. Her slim ringless fingers kept clasping and unclasping. Suddenly she turned and faced him and he noticed now that her blue eyes were sweetly misty.

"Honestly, it isn't really going to make any difference to you?" she demanded. "Will you, if you lend it to me, have to go without one single thing?"

Smith met her eyes unfalteringly. He was smiling now, for he was remembering that film contract to be signed on the following day.

"Not—one—single—thing—honestly," he answered.

She gave a sigh of relief, but still seemed a little troubled.

"I never knew they made men like you nowadays," she said simply. "I may be a thief, swindler, anything. You know nothing whatever about me and yet——"

"I'm willing to trust you—glad to do so," finished Smith quietly. "Though if I do it it must be only on certain conditions."

She was gazing straight ahead, but he saw her stiffen. It seemed to him when she answered that her voice was a little hard.

"What are they?"

"I propose sending you the notes to-night," he replied, "but I want you to promise me *faithfully* that, at any rate for the next six months, you won't try to see me or communicate with me in any way whatsoever. Will you?"

He was not looking at her. If he had been he would have seen swift relief, amazement, incredulity, sweep over her face, yet superimposed over them all such a wonderful tenderness as he, Smith, had never yet looked upon in woman's eyes.

"Why are you insisting on this?" she asked presently.

"Because you will now lie under some obligation to me," quietly, "or you will fancy you do. And it is always a bad thing for a girl to feel she lies under an obligation to any man—especially a stranger. Possibly," he smiled a little whimsically, "I am paying you a rather doubtful compliment by my insistence, but—well, it's better so, I think. You see, if we were to be meeting constantly you couldn't help feeling, 'He's the man I owe money to.' And that would only worry you."

When the girl spoke again her voice was a little wistful.

"But we might meet again at the end of the six months—when I've managed to pay you back?" she queried. "At least—if you cared to."

"Perhaps *you* won't want to," he countered, smiling. "Oh, don't you see what I mean? I—I——"

"I think I quite see what you mean," said Rosamund Harcourt softly. "Funny!" Her voice was dreamy and very far away. "And I thought I knew men."

John Cavendish Smith sat at his writing-table staring straight before him, trying to realise it all. For it seemed to him that of all the cruel tricks providence had ever played on him this was the cruellest. And for the first time in his life, bitterness rose within him.

THE MONTEFIORE FILM CO.,
PRESTOVER STREET,
LONDON.

DEAR MR. SMITH,—

I am exceedingly sorry to have to tell you that our fire of yesterday was considerably more serious than was reported in the papers. Owing to the very extensive damage done, my directors tell me that it will be impossible for us to start on any new undertakings for several months to come. Therefore most regretfully I have to return you your film scenario, though I feel sure you won't have any difficulty in placing it elsewhere.

Yours sincerely,
ARTHUR MOUNTAIN.

Smith laughed bitterly. It was the unconscious irony of the last paragraph that brought the laugh. The Montefiore Film Co., wonderfully keen themselves on his new book, had apparently little idea that it had already been refused in a dozen of the English studios.

Wearily his eyes wandered to another letter that lay on his table. A registered letter it was, done up a quarter of an hour earlier and addressed to Miss Rosamund Harcourt, and in that letter was seventy pounds in bank-notes, and . . .

It was a struggle, yet hardly that. It was just a momentary impulse, such as would cross the mind of any man similarly placed. Yet John Cavendish Smith, known as "Gally," knew that he could never yield to that momentary impulse. He saw clearly, of course, what it would mean. He saw his bank balance dwindled to five pounds, he saw the old endless round of struggles all starting again. But he had given his word . . . and all he saw now was a pair of sweet misty blue eyes, and a soft girlish voice which said, "I never knew they made men like you nowadays."

And before that, Sir Galahad was Sir Galahad once more. . . .

The girl who gave him his receipt for the registered letter at the Post Office wondered curiously why he smiled so queerly as he tucked the flimsy little slip into his pocket-book. Had she known the truth she might have wondered more.

It was five months later. There was a dance at one of the big houses of Mayfair, and Rosamund Harcourt, because she was Rosamund Harcourt, was there. For Rosamund was one of Society's loveliest



débutantes. You saw her photograph constantly in the papers—a little serious sometimes, but not the less beautiful for that. People said that latterly Rosamund Harcourt had grown serious. They couldn't understand why. They opined that a young and beautiful woman, especially if she be an heiress, has no business ever to be serious. Her persistent refusal to be engaged, too, during the last six months, was perplexing Society. It knew she had received scores of offers, a number of them from eminently desirable young men. It came to the reluctant conclusion that Rosamund Harcourt was fastidious. The

day would come, it declared, when she might regret . . .

Now she was sitting amid the palms, surrounded as usual by half a dozen men of various ages. To them approached a tall fair-haired young man in the early thirties—evidently a popular favourite from the way they all greeted him.



"Rosamund sat up in her chair. Her face was suddenly white. Tragedy seemed charging the air now. One and all felt it as they gazed at her."

"Hallo, Jeff, had a good holiday?"

The young man dropped into a chair and produced a cigarette-case. His name was Jeffrey Wilson and he possessed eight thousand a year.

"Top-hole," he answered. "Met half a dozen of the old Winchester brigade. Rosie, you're looking lovelier than ever. If only you'd marry me——"

"Well, I won't," laughed the girl, "so there."

"I believe our Rosie's nursing a secret pash," said a short dark man with an eyeglass. "Ever since that memorable advertisement she's been different. Oh, you paid up like a lamb, my dear," seeing the girl about to speak, "but you've never told us a word about it, and I for one——"

"Oh, shut up, Jim," interrupted the girl, colouring a little. "Jeff, tell us all about your holiday and who you met."

Conversation flamed up then. Names kept cropping up, interspersed with continual "D'you remembers," as old days at Winchester were discussed. Then:

"By the way, I met a chap of our time—Dicky Longstaff—who sees 'Gally' occasionally. You remember 'Gally'?"

"What! 'Gally' Smith? The one and only 'Gally'?"—in chorus.

"Sure thing." He turned to Rosamund. "Gally's short for Sir Galahad, Rosie. And he *was* to the life! Ugly devil—till he smiled. Then you shifted your ideas. D'you remember that marvellous century he made against——?"

"Rather!" chimed in another. "And d'you remember when he went in off the bridge to save that kid's puppy?"

"Do I not?" retorted the other. "*And* what he said to the 'Head' when the old chap read him the riot act over bravery and foolhardiness."

"Who's your hero?" asked Rosamund carelessly.

"'Gally.' Smith was at Winchester with us—John Cavendish Smith to give him—— Why, d'you know him, Rosie?"

For the girl had sat up suddenly. Her cheeks were flushed and her eyes were starry.

"Oh, it *must* be the same one!" she exclaimed breathlessly. "Tell me some more about him. My man was tall, bronzed, with the most wonderful smile I've ever seen. He's an author."

"That's the fellow. He evidently made an impression——"

"Oh, don't be a fool," interrupted the girl, but her interest was obvious, though now she was endeavouring to hide it. She lay back in her chair and produced a cigarette-case.

"I liked him," she said with an attempt at carelessness. "What's he doing now? The last time I met him he was full of a picture he'd sold to the Montefiore Co."

"Ah," replied the man, "that was the wickedest bit of luck that ever happened to a man."

"What d'you mean, Jeff?"

The girl had sat up in her chair. Her face was suddenly white. Tragedy seemed charging the air now. One and all felt it as they gazed at her.

"Oh, you didn't know then? It was over their fire. They'd as good as accepted Smith's film, six hundred quid, which would have been a god-send to the poor chap. They wrote and said the deal was off. He's been very ill too, I'm told!"

"Oh!"

It was a cry wrung from the depths of a girl's heart, and they all stared at her, amazed. But she was on her feet in a second, clutching at Wilson's coat-sleeve.

"Jeff, I must know at once. This man Smith—where's he living?"

"My dear child——"

"Oh, quit fooling!"—passionately. "It's desperate—desperate. Is he still at Great Wilton Street, d'you know?"

"That's right. I said I'd look him up. Seventy-seven——"

He broke off abruptly. The girl was across the room and flying down the broad staircase. For a few seconds the men gazed at each other helplessly. Then Wilson spoke again.

"I wonder what it all means?" he queried.

The man with the eyeglass smiled . . . but it was a rather nice smile.

"From the look in Rosamund's eyes," he said thoughtfully, "I have a hunch that it means three clergymen, six bridesmaids, and a full choral service."

"Dear old Gally," murmured the other. "I reckon it's time he had a bit of luck!"

Rosamund never hesitated, but then the Rosamunds of this world never *do* hesitate. As she jumped into her car, slammed the door and jammed down the self-starter she vaguely remembered that it was half-past nine, that she was in the scantiest of frocks, that she had forgotten her cloak. But it was only a momentary thought. It was



"'This is the first time I've ever had to beg for love. Would you shame me, Sir Galahad?'"

John Cavendish Smith to the exclusion of all else now, and her whirling little brain could hold nothing more. So she just raced to Bloomsbury, heedless of such mundane things as traffic and speed limits. . . .

The landlady who opened the door viewed her a trifle suspiciously. For Rosamund, flushed, lovely, scantily attired, hatless and breathless, was almost an object for suspicion.

"Oh, please, does Mr. Smith live here?"

"He does, Miss, but——"

"Could I *possibly* see him?" pleaded Rosamund. "You don't know how urgent it is! I've just come straight from a dance, that's why I'm like this. If I could only see him—he knows me well and——"

Before the sweet pleading of the girl's eyes and voice the landlady's suspicions melted as snow before the sun. She sensed a romance and her heart was touched.

"Will you go up, Miss?" she said. "You can't miss it. It's right at the top of the house. The door straight in front of you's his sittin' room. He won't have gone to bed yet. He works rare late he does—much too late, I often tell him."

But Rosamund was already half-way up the staircase. Her eyes were blurred a little, but not too blurred to notice things. Poverty she saw in a moment dwelt here . . . though it was poverty that strove valiantly to hold high its head.

As she came to the top of the stairs she stopped. Before her was a door from beneath which came a beam of light. Rosamund's heart was pounding. . . .

With a supreme effort she knocked.

"Come in!" said a voice, a voice she remembered well—oh, so well! Yet now it seemed to her it sounded just a little weary.

"Miss Harcourt—*you*!"

It seemed to her that in that one moment, though her eyes were only for John Cavendish Smith, who had jumped up from his table and was facing her too amazed to speak, every detail of that tiny room was indelibly photographed on her brain. She saw the man himself, dressing-gowned, his pipe in his hand, the paper-littered table, the shabby well-worn easy chair, the bookshelves, the prints on the walls, the golf clubs in the corner. Yet more than all these she had in that glance caught sight of something which sent the colour surging into her cheeks and set her heart racing. That was a picture of herself, cut from one of the papers. Silver-framed, it stood alone on the mantelpiece, where no woman's photo had ever yet stood. . . . And on each side of it, tributes laid before the altar of love, were fresh flowers.

It was that which gave her back her voice. She was no longer afraid. She even smiled. For Rosamund, society beauty, who for the last six months had been wondering, now *knew*. And when a woman who loves knows, no power on earth can take the happiness from her heart or the smile from her lips.

"I just had to come," she said. "I only heard a quarter of an hour ago that you had been ill, and," she paused fractionally, her eyes on his, "about your film."

She saw the little frown that shadowed his face, though it passed almost as quickly as it had come. He drew up his easy chair for her.

"Please sit down," he said. "It's just fine to see you here. All the same, I suppose," he smiled whimsically now, "I ought to read you the riot act for breaking your word. And for your own sake, you know, you oughtn't to be here at this time of night."

"Rubbish!"—very softly. Then, "I've come to ask you a question."

He avoided those clear steady eyes. His own were a little troubled.

"Well?"

"Is it true that your film deal fell through?"

"It is."

"You told me that that seventy pounds meant nothing to you. I take it that if that film deal had come off it *would* have meant nothing to you, as you said?"

"Nothing at all," he answered quietly.

"But it didn't come off," she persisted. "Can you look me in the eyes and tell me honest-to-God that it still meant nothing?"

For a second he paused. She saw his hands clench. Then slowly he raised his eyes.

"I know you won't lie to me—Sir Galahad," she said softly.

"I—I'd do it all over again."

"That's no answer to my question!" Then swiftly, eagerly: "Oh, d'you think I don't know? Almost it comes to me now that the bad news came *first*, and rather than break your word to me you crippled yourself. Rather than let me down because you thought I was in trouble you'd have *starved*. Oh, Sir Galahad," her eyes were

like twin stars, "it was wonderful of you—just wonderful!"

"You're making too much of it," he said quietly; "any man would have done the same."

She laughed, softly, sweetly, as the brook laughs, dancing over the pebbles.

"I know better. But"—she was grave again now, and there was sadness in her voice—"I too have a confession to make . . . one maybe that when I tell you will make you hate me. But I can never rest till I have told you . . . and asked your forgiveness."

He turned and stared at her in sudden bewilderment.

"Your forgiveness?"

"My forgiveness," she answered in low tones. "I shall get it, I know, because—well, you're you! But I hope you'll always try to think . . . it was only just the thoughtless action of a headstrong girl. I never dreamed what it might lead to."

"But I don't understand!"

She leaned forward in her chair. Her eyes were gazing into the fire. At last she spoke.

"It was just six people at a dinner-table . . . six people discussing men. A girl—a fool-girl who thought it clever to be cynical, who thought it fine to judge all men by the few selfish ones she had met. She made a bet, this girl——" she paused a moment, then went on bravely and impressively, as if anxious for every word to sink in, "who has never once in her life been without a big bank balance—that if she put an advertisement in the papers . . . she wouldn't find one single man in England who'd lend her the money *without demanding a return of some sort*! I was that girl. I took your money. In a way I was glad to take it. You'd opened my eyes. You'd shown me what a miserable little fool I was. I've never changed it. It's locked away at home. But all the time I never dreamed, never guessed, that you were in need of it. When the six months had elapsed I was planning to send for you—to confess everything . . . to tell you that you had built up again the faith of at least *one* girl!"

There was a long silence. When the man spoke again he was smiling thoughtfully.

"Fancy imagining that I could ever hate you," he said. "I'd have gone through a million times more rather than have missed it."

"Why?" Her voice was scarcely above a whisper. "I want to know why?"

He got up abruptly from his chair, took his pouch from the mantelpiece, started ramming tobacco fiercely into his pipe. His back was towards her, but she could see that his eyes were on her picture.

"All sorts of reasons," he answered abruptly.

She smiled.

"D'you think that's a good picture of me?" she asked presently.

"I do."

"I don't see any other girls' photos here?"

"I don't know many girls."

His back was still turned to her. He was not to see the sweet tender mischief that was dancing in her blue eyes.

"But it's wise, of course, to remind yourself continually and warn your friends of a brazen little hussy who——"

He swung round in a moment.

"You shan't say such things. You——"

He bit the sentence off, but the girl had risen from her chair and was facing him.

"Half a hundred men," she said deliberately, and though the pink was in her cheeks, her eyes were unfaltering, "have tried to make love to me during my life. This is the first time I've ever had to beg for love. Would you shame me, Sir Galahad?"

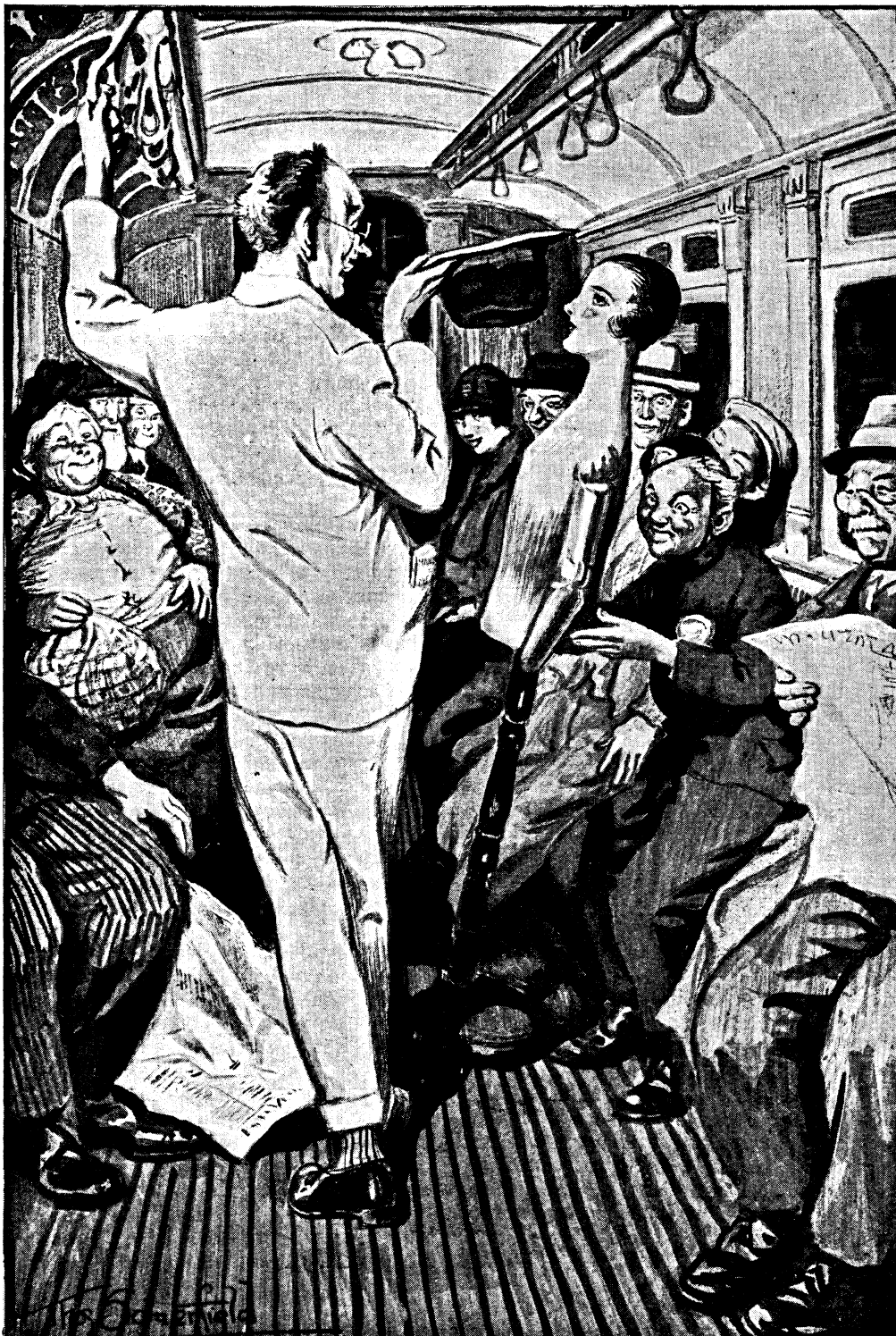
"Oh, my dear, my dear," he answered, "how can it be? I, just a struggling author, with nothing to offer you——"

"But love!" she broke in. "And nothing but that counts with a girl like me."

Then, as she moved a little closer, his arms went round her. Her eyes were saying unutterable things.

"Ever since the day I met you," he began unsteadily, "I have dreamed——"

"So have I," she interrupted, smiling, "but I'm tired of dreams, Sir Galahad! I'm a girl . . . wake me!"



THE VISION SPLENDID.

SHORT-SIGHTED PASSENGER: Take my seat, madam!

MÆVE

By RICHMAL CROMPTON

Author of "Sugar and Spice," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LINDSAY CABLE

SHE stood motionless, her elbows leaning on the carved balustrade of the terrace, gazing unseeingly over the garden. It lay still and beautiful in the haze of the moonlight—the ancient trees, darkly outlined in the silver mist of the dewy grass, the shimmer of the fountain in the sunk garden, the gleam of the river in the distance. In the moonlight the girl's small face gleamed like marble—she might have been one of the carved figures in the Italian garden just beyond the terrace, so still, so white, she was, so part and parcel of the scene around her. Then the spell was broken, she shivered and drew her scarf around her . . . but after that she fell motionless again almost at once—a spell-bound statue in a magic moonlit garden.

Yet she was no statue. The eyes beneath the white lowered lids were bright and restless. As far as they could see on every side the land was her father's and she was her father's only child, but there was no pride in them. She was to be a bride in a few weeks' time but there was no happiness in them. There was only fear and unhappiness and a desperation that went pitifully with her youth. For she was little more than a child, a slim white child carven in marble or ivory. She was trying, trying desperately, to think things out, to come to some decision. Her road seemed to lie so dark before her and—there was no one to help.

Her thoughts went back over her childhood—a lonely neglected childhood—in the old Manor-house. She had always shrunk from her father. Though of aristocratic stock, he was coarse-grained and overbearing. He took as little interest in his daughter as in his wife. He despised the two of them. He liked high-coloured, loud-voiced women who could "give back as good as they got." His wife couldn't. Neither could his daughter. The child grew up in an unhealthy atmosphere—loving passionately the unhappy woman who was her mother, shrinking from her father's coarse jokes and alien standards (he never actually ill-treated either of them), always bewildered and dimly afraid. Her mother had been disillusioned and heartbroken before the child was born. Love gave Mæve an understanding of her mother's sufferings that was unchildlike and a curious hidden bitterness that was more unchildlike still. She learnt to know which of her father's coarse jests were meant to hurt her mother. She learnt to understand allusions that no child should understand. And with it all she retained a curious unworldliness, a naïve childishness, oddly at variance with that secret bitterness. Things would not, of course, have been so bad had money been plentiful in the old Manor-house. Money can oil the wheels and hide the cracks in a marvellous fashion. But there was little money. It was an ancient property, entailed, long gone to rack and ruin, a property which needed an army of servants for its upkeep and which more often had to subsist on no servants at all. Her mother, who should have been a châtelaine, was a household drudge. On all sides it met them—this cramping, fettering, embittering lack of money. It lay like a leaden weight upon Mæve's childish spirit. It threw a black shade over the whole house. It made her father's jests more cruel, her mother's hopelessness more hopeless, the whole weight of things more unbearable. And then when Mæve was eighteen her mother died. It made less difference than might have been expected. Automatically Mæve took the care of the household upon her childish shoulders. Her father avoided her. She was quiet and aloof and silent, but there was about her something proud and unbroken which his wife had never had. And she on her side was willing enough to avoid him. She still shrank from his coarse humour, his clumsy malicious probing of any sensitive spot she unwittingly showed him. Her time was well filled. She had

been trained in a hard school. She had acquired early the art of making sixpence do the work of a shilling. Her small hands grew roughened with household work. Her father spent little time at home. He was not liked by his neighbours and had a large crowd of congenial and rather dubious friends in London. She gathered that he borrowed money recklessly from all sources. So little confidence was there between them that he never even told her of his approaching marriage. She was amazed one day by the appearance upon the scene of an army of workmen who at once set about extensive alterations and repairs. He arrived the next day and told her casually that he was being married before the end of the year and that the place was being put in order for his bride. Though he did not say so she inferred that it was being put in order with the bride's money, for she knew that he had none. He told her little about his future wife except that her name was Rosie and that her father had made his money in the woollen trade and that she was a "damned good sort." In saying this he threw her the contemptuous glance he had always thrown to her mother when he praised other women in her presence. . . .

So Mæve did not see her stepmother till she arrived as mistress of the house. Her father introduced them.

"My daughter Mæve, Rosie," he said, "a damned cold-blooded little thing, I've always found her, but you may get on with her better."

So Rosie, giggling, laid herself out to charm.

Rosie was worse than Mæve's worst fears. Her hair was startlingly golden, her cheeks and lips were startlingly red, her lashes were startlingly black, and she was too plump for her height. She giggled a good deal, could look devastatingly coy and was fond of telling her husband not to "be saucy." But there was no doubt about her wealth. She had inherited the whole fortune of the woollen merchant and she was prepared to place it unreservedly in her husband's hands. She was proud of the marriage she had made. She insisted on her husband's family tree being framed (after her own name had been inserted) and hung in the hall. And she took the greatest interest in the restoration of the manor. Her husband had showed himself unexpectedly firm. There were to be no little ornamental pagodas on the grounds, no ornamental turrets and battlements and gables added to the austere Elizabethan building. It was to be restored, that was all. Rosie sulked a little.

"Well, I must say," she said, "I think it would look so pretty with little towers an' things, an' those little holes they used to shoot through. I'm sure I've often seen them in pictures of old houses and such-like."

"You've never seen them in houses built in Elizabeth's reign."

"Oh, get on! You and your Elizabeth."

"Oh, I've no use for Elizabeth. I'd rather have Rosie any day."

She giggled, highly pleased.

The sudden influx of wealth into the house deprived Mæve of her work. No need any more to skimp and scrape, to count the pennies, to busy herself in household tasks. There was a housekeeper and an army of servants. Rosie as mistress of the house gave orders on an ostentatious scale. The servants laughed at her behind her back, but were obsequious enough to her face. She might be a "jumped-up," but it was a good place and they drew good wages.

Mæve would have been content now to withdraw into the background, to be left in peace for the first time in her life with her books and her dreams. She would not have minded had Rosie been actually hostile to her. She was prepared for that. But Rosie neither ignored her nor was hostile to her. Instead she made determined and ceaseless efforts to win her friendship, pursuing her relentlessly from room to room, babbling confidences, being by turns arch and, worst of all, "refined." It was torture to Mæve; the environment of her upbringing had not encouraged a sense of humour in her. Rosie's assault upon her began on the very night of her arrival and thereafter gave her no peace. Mæve went to her room directly after dinner, but Rosie followed her, closed the door, and sat down upon her bed.

"Now I just want a nice little talk with you, dearie," she said effusively. "I think us two girls is going to be the greatest pals, don't you?"

Her over-coloured, over-scented, over-exuberant presence seemed to fill the room. Mæve, white and slender by the dressing-table, looked like something at bay. Her dark eyes were fixed watchfully upon the visitor.

"It's kind of you," she faltered, "but I——"

"Shy, ain't you?" said Rosie, with expansive sympathy. "Sort of reserved. Well, that's just what I'm like myself. My friends always say, 'Well, Rosie, I never came across anyone as *reserved* as what you are.' Sensitive an' highly strung, that's what I'm like. All my friends say so. A gentleman I used to know before I met your Dad, he used to say, 'Well, Rosie,' he used to say, 'I've never met anyone as reserved and highly strung as what you are.' I think that you and me's very much alike in every way. I do indeed. Come and sit nearer to me, dearie. I feel sure we're going to be ever such pals. What sort of face powder do you use, love? And, oh, my dear, I can tell you of a *splendid* rouge . . . *nothing* brings it off, not even sea bathing . . . you're a bit pale, aren't you, dearie? I must take you to my room and show you what I use. I've got some stuff, too, that makes your lashes look jet-black and quite—what do they call it?—undetectable . . . You'd never say I looked made up, would you, dear, now? No, I hate anything like that. I'm so simple and straightforward. But just a touch is neither here nor there——"

Of course Mæve realised dimly that it was funny—or rather that it ought to have been funny. But she couldn't see it as funny, only as something hateful and desecrating, that this woman should be in her dead mother's place. Her face was pale, strained, tragic . . . the other woman burbled on.

"Funny, isn't it, to think of a child like me being your stepmother. That's what all my friends said to me. 'Well, Rosie,' they said, 'just think of a child like you being anyone's stepmother.' I'm little more than a schoolgirl, dearie. Just out of the schoolroom, as they say in books. And, as I said, such a simple nature. A mere child in the ways of the world. You could have knocked me down with a feather when your Dad asked me to marry him. I wasn't prepared. I'd never thought of such things. I was just a simple child. Of course, I couldn't help knowing that I'd got looks. Modesty itself, I couldn't help knowing that I'd got looks. Nothing against you, dearie, but people say there's something so *striking* about my looks. 'Well, Rosie,' they all say, 'there's something so *striking* about your looks.' . . . The first time your Dad met me he said," she blushed and giggled, "well, now, I'd better not tell you that, had I? Not that it came as any great surprise, of course. Gentlemen have always admired me. I expect you've got quite a lot of admirers too, dearie, haven't you?" She waited coyly for an answer. Mæve could not speak. Helplessly she moved her shapely dark head. "No? Ah . . . I must introduce you to some gentlemen friends of mine . . . give you a real good slap-up time like what a girl of your age ought to have—and a nice lot of gentlemen for you to flirt with."

She began to move about the room examining, appraising. "Who's this, dearie? Your mother? Well, now, fancy that!" She looked with interest at the pale, proud, hopeless face among the shadows of the dim oil-painting. "She'd got style all right, but a bit colourless, same as you, wasn't she? Your Dad's not told me much about her. Older than me, of course. Looked her age, I should say, too. Be nice for you to have someone young an' jolly like me about the place for a change——"

Mæve stood, her head turned away, her childish figure rigid, her nails digging into her palms. She wanted to scream, to fight, to tear at the woman's smooth vulgar face with her hands.

Rosie moved her eyes from the portrait and continued her inspection of the room.

"Not got many pretty things about, have you, dearie, same as a girl ought to have? I'll get you a few things. I can see that my money's going to be useful, what? Not that I mean your Dad married me for my money. No. A girl with my looks needn't be afraid of *that*. But it seems to me that both of you are going to find it useful." She opened the wardrobe door and inspected the contents curiously. "Well, now, I never did! You'll excuse me saying so, dearie, but I never did see a shabbier lot of things. I tell you what I'll do. I'll set you up with a new slap-up rig-out. I will indeed. Why, I'd be ashamed to be seen out with you in any of these things. Not a single of this season's, is there, dearie? . . . This shape of skirt, now . . . it went out about three years ago, surely. It's pleats this year. But don't you worry. I'll rig you out. I expect you've been reckonin' on that, eh?"

Mæve's proud, childish face was ashen. She had never dreamed of any humiliation like this. It was like a nightmare. How could she go on living?

"Do you mind going?" she said slowly.

"I—I've got a headache. I want to go to bed."

She went on living, of course. The weeks dragged by. And Rosie, indomitably good-natured, obtusely generous, appallingly vulgar, pursued her relentlessly. She took her shrinking for shyness, she was so thick-skinned that hints were of no avail. No room in the house was secure against her. She came to Mæve's bedroom every night for confidential talks, she criticised all that Mæve held dearest, she talked interminably—garrulous, expansive, complacent, making unheard-of confidences, unheard-of jests, with no reserve, no sensitiveness, no decencies, jarring Mæve's quivering nerves at every turn. No longer could Mæve even read by herself. Rosie was the type of woman who cannot bear to be alone. As soon as her husband left her she sought Mæve. Of Mæve's shrinking and recoil she saw nothing. She told her husband that she found her "stupid, but better to talk to than no one." And gradually Mæve's shrinking turned to a sick hatred.

On one point she stood firm. She would not accept Rosie's presents. Her pride would not let her do that. Despite her refusals, Rosie gave her dresses—over-elaborate, expensive affairs—but they hung unworn in the old-fashioned wardrobe, and Mæve went about in the shabby shapeless clothes to which her dark beauty yet gave dignity and grace. But she could not escape Rosie's munificence. The life of the house was now one of luxury and affluence, and the thought that she was living on Rosie's charity was a dull, dragging weight at Mæve's heart, increasing that curious secret bitterness of her childhood.

Then just as she was desperate with the shame and misery of it, a hand was outstretched to save her and she grasped at it.

John Frewin proposed and she accepted him.

Though John Frewin has only just come into the story he has really been there the whole time, but he was so quiet, so much in the background that, until now, there has been no need to mention him. He had watched Mæve from the beginning, he had seen what was happening to her at every stage of her life, and he had always loved her. He had helped her, but so carefully that often she did not realise whence the help came. He had seen her as a lonely overworked child, her bright spirit too soon shadowed by bitterness and care; he had seen her when the whole household rested upon her frail shoulders; he had last of all watched her with Rosie and had known that that was the worst of all, the last drop in the sea of her humiliation; that every word, every look of Rosie's was like a rough hand fingering raw quivering nerves.

He was their next-door neighbour, a bachelor ten years older than she. Their other neighbours had long ceased to have any social dealings with them. Her father had alienated them; the neglect of the place offended them; and the thought of the child who battled with it alone made them feel vaguely uncomfortable and self-reproachful, so that they found it easier to ignore her existence. Frewin was abroad a good deal, but whenever he returned his first thought was of her and, truth to tell, he thought of her, a good deal when he was away. Somehow she had never objected to receiving presents of eggs and vegetables from him. He always seemed so grateful to her for accepting them. More than once, too, he had sent her his gardener to restore the overgrown Manor garden to some sort of order. He had fetched her purchases from town, and had had the Manor meadow mown for her and had sold the hay for her, giving her as the proceeds a much larger sum than he had really obtained. He had done her a thousand little unobtrusive services. Yet he meant nothing in her scheme of things. She looked upon him with indifference. He was, as it were, merely part of the landscape. He was kind, but he did not enter into the real part of her life; his kindness could not be any antidote to the humiliation of her daily lot. She could not have told you the colour of his eyes, nor whether he were good-looking or not, though his face was one of the familiar landmarks of her childhood. He was a lean, hatchet-faced man with a gentle manner, kind eyes, an unexpectedly strong mouth and jaw. He was shy and silent, and few of his neighbours knew him intimately. And until that amazing afternoon when he proposed to her, Mæve had not considered him in any way at all. Then suddenly she saw him not as a friend or a lover or a husband, but as a rescuer. He was a way out when she had thought no way out possible. Yet even in the midst of her relief was a tiny fear. Though she knew little enough of

life she had read in plenty stories of chivalry of the days of old.

"I'll marry you if you like, but—I don't love you," she confessed to him, unhappily.

She could not see from his face whether he minded—very much. One could see so little from his face.

"No," he said, "I'd hardly dared to hope—that. But if you'll marry me I'll try to make you happy. You're—not happy at home, are you?"

"No, but——" She was still uncertain. "That means I—take so much and give so little."

He laughed, though his mouth was rather twisted.

"Not at all. . . . I give you a home—you give me your companionship."

She broke in eagerly:

"And I can help, can't I? I mean, I've had a lot of experience. I can look after your house. I can save you quite a lot of money. Housekeepers and servants are so extravagant."

There was something indescribably poignant in her gallant childish desire to fulfil her part of the bargain.

"Of course," he assented gravely. "You'll save me pounds and pounds."

Though his eyes were tender she suspected that he was laughing at her.

She came back to the point whence she had begun.

"You're so good and kind," she said wistfully. "I wish I loved you."

A gleam of hope came into his eyes.

"You don't love anyone else?" he said gently.

"No."

He smiled at her.

"You'll love me when we're married," he said.

Naïvely she believed him and the weight dropped from her heart.

After that things were better. The hopelessness was gone. Her father readily gave his consent and the engagement was announced. Rather to her surprise, Mæve learnt that her fiancé was a rich man and that he had been the most sought after *parti* in the neighbourhood. They decided to be married in two months' time. Rosie, of course, revelled in it. She began to plan a wedding on the scale of a pantomime transformation scene. She sulked and even wept because Mæve refused to allow her to provide the trousseau. She soon recovered, however, to tease Mæve coyly and archly, making continual references to her engagement and coming wedding. She had a repulsive habit of giggling and nudging Mæve whenever the words love or marriage were mentioned in any connection. Her jesting allusions to it were coarse and primitive and a continual torture to Mæve's fastidiousness. Yet she steeled herself. It was only a question of weeks now. There was John with his quietness and tenderness and understanding. The future wasn't black any more.

And then, when things were calmer and happier than they had ever been before in Mæve's life, George arrived. George's looks were of the perfect matinée idol type. His hair curled adorably, his nose was a straight line from forehead to tip, his eyes were grey and steady, deep-set with dark curling lashes, his mouth might have been copied from a Greek statue, his chin was square with a cleft in it. And George was young and vital, with a perfection of physique that held a sex appeal to which no girl could have been quite unconscious. Everything about him suggested gallant courage and unconquerable youth. There is, after all this, a touch of bathos in saying that George was a chauffeur, except that there is nowadays a certain glamour over the rank of chauffeur. Chauffeurs may be ex-officers, public-school men, noblemen down on their luck, or—anyone. Chauffeurs' duties do not carry the same brand of inferiority as do those of a footman or valet. A chauffeur can never be referred to as a "flunkey." Mæve had known no young people. She had been cheated of her youth. This god in livery with his gallantry, his vitality, his flaming, irresponsible youth, typified something that had never come into her life before. It bewildered her, threw her off her balance.

George came to the Manor as chauffeur to Rosie. Rosie had two cars, and it was she who suggested that George should teach Mæve to drive one of them. She herself was too lazy to drive. She had nudged Mæve and giggled when she suggested it.

"Good thing your affections are engaged elsewhere, dearie. I'd be afraid to trust you with George. He's a raving beaut, George is. He'd make his fortune on the films any day."

Yet George was not merely a blatantly good-looking coxcomb. There was about him a touch of diffidence and shyness that added to his attractiveness. And his handsomeness, too, just stopped short of being



too ornate. He was not the "barber's model" type. Nor was there anything effeminate about him.

Mæve went to her first lesson, her mind occupied only with her determination to acquire the art of driving in as short a time as possible. She was not thinking of George till she saw him holding open the door of the car, and then . . . as she got in their eyes met and—something happened to her. She didn't know what it was, but she was aware that something was happening to her. A strange joy, partly physical, partly spiritual, flooded her whole being. She felt for the first time in her life exuberantly, lightheartedly, unreasoningly happy. And during the lesson, whenever their eyes met, whenever his hands touched hers on the steering-wheel, the same sudden unreasoning happiness surged over her.

She passed the next few days in a sort of blind rapture. She lived only in the present, refusing to look before or behind her. Every care seemed to drop suddenly from her overburdened spirit. She lived for the times when his eyes would meet hers or his hand touch hers, and that strange sweet ecstasy seize her. Yet even then she refused to face what it was, to admit to herself what had happened to her. She only knew that for the first time in her life youth and happiness had come to her and she welcomed them fiercely, clinging to them, with a kind of desperation, refusing for the present to face the complications they were bringing in their train.

George was respectful enough. He never forgot the "Miss," he never forgot the hand to his cap and the slight air of standing to attention that was his tribute to her position. But they were both young and carefree—Mæve for the first time in her life—and it was inevitable that the distance between them should lessen as time went

on, that his respect should melt into friendliness, that little intimate jokes should spring up between them, that they should begin to laugh together over her mistakes. The

but the rapture of his presence, laughing lightheartedly as she had never done before. Something that had been starved in her all her life was reaching out with both hands



"'I've no more use for 'er, I tell you, than I have for the rest of the swells.'"

hours she spent with him flew by on golden wings.

There came an afternoon when she let him drive her where he would, nestling happily beside him, conscious of nothing to the warmth of his youth. . . . They passed a pretty roadside café and she had a sudden impulse to ask him to have tea with her there. She dismissed the idea at once as impossible, but somehow—strangely

enough—it was that which pulled her up sharp, brought her to her senses. She became suddenly hotly aware of the indignity, the sordidness of a clandestine flirtation with an employé of her stepmother's. She saw what had been a roseate dream as something drab and squalid. Her fastidiousness revolted from it. She grew pale and shivered, drawing away from the man beside her to the farther corner of the car. He looked at her.

"Cold?" he said.

His eyes meeting hers could still send that strange thrill of rapture through her, but she answered in a small far-away voice:

"No . . . not cold, but—I think we'd better go straight home—now."

And that night she escaped from Rosie and went out into the garden and leant against the terrace gazing unseeingly over the moonlit garden trying to think things out.

She faced it now. She loved him. That meant first of all that she couldn't marry John. Unhappiness and anxiety descended upon her again. She couldn't marry John. The door that had opened to show her a way out was closed. The hand that had been outstretched to her was withdrawn. There remained—George. She loved George, loved his every movement, his every glance. He was a chauffeur, of course, but he wasn't an ordinary chauffeur. He didn't speak like a chauffeur. He had a gentleman's accent and a gentleman's ways. If she married him she'd be awfully poor. But she wouldn't mind being poor. She was used to being poor. She'd really been happier when poor than she was since Rosie came with her ostentatious display of wealth. She was more fitted for a poor man's wife than a rich man's wife. . . . And George? . . . No word or gesture of love had passed between them, and yet—and yet—— Oh, surely some of that roseate happiness that had enveloped her had enveloped him too. . . . Surely one could not love as she loved without being loved in return. . . . Surely his eyes had told her that he loved her.

Standing there, white and slim and proud in the moonlight, she thought of George, and her dark eyes in her pale face shone like stars. Then the glow faded and she faced again the position in which she found herself—engaged to a man she did not love, in love with an employé of Rosie's. Despite her rapture, it was a bitter pill for her pride. But her very pride drove her to put the matter above-board at once, to tell the truth frankly to all who were concerned in it, however much it cost her. From behind her, through the open window of the drawing-room, came Rosie's shrill, unmelodious voice as she sang the latest music-hall song, strumming her accompaniment on the piano. She ought to tell them first—her father and Rosie. She turned and went slowly indoors through the open French window.

Her father was sitting in an easy chair, his head back, humming the song his wife was playing.

"Well?" he said as Mæve entered. "Finished communing with your superior soul out there?"

He couldn't speak to Mæve without a sneer. His dislike of her had increased since his marriage. She reminded him more and more of his first wife, and he hated being reminded of his first wife. . . .

Rosie stopped playing.

"No," she said kindly. "Mæve loves nature, don't you, dearie? I understand because I've got a perfect passion for nature myself. Always have had from a mere child. My friends used to say, 'Well, Rosie, if ever anyone's ever had a perfect passion for nature it's you.' I'm very like you, dearie, in lots of ways. Simple and fond of nature and that sort of thing. More *go* in me, of course. But that's not your fault, dearie. I often say we're all as God made us and should never complain of each other. Now, come in, dearie, and help with the chorus. We're having a jolly evening."

"Jolly evenings don't appeal to Mæve," said her father with a sneer. "I'm sorry for Frewin. I suppose the poor fellow will just have to sit indoors and drink while she goes out into the garden to commune with her superior soul."

Rosie flitted across the room, and sat on his knee, slapping him playfully.

"Now, I won't have you saying such things to the poor child. She can't help being a bit on the stodgy side, and we're all as God made us."

"Not quite," he said; "don't tell me God made your cheeks that colour. It seems to me you've got yourself to thank for that, and a very pretty piece of work too."

She screamed with laughter and slapped him again.

Mæve went out again. She couldn't tell them—couldn't. And suddenly the old feeling of desperation swept over her again.

She'd go to George. . . . That was the only thing she could do. . . . She'd go to George. She set off towards the garage over which George had his small flat. She'd never gone down there before. She'd no idea what she would say to George, only—she must see him, talk things out with him. She took the short cut through the trees. . . . She was almost there now.

Suddenly she stopped short. She could hear George's voice . . . she could see George. He was sitting on the bench just outside the garage in the moonlight, and with him sat Annie, one of the housemaids. George was capless and coatless, his waistcoat was unbuttoned; there was about him a general atmosphere of being off duty. That air of alertness, of spic-and-spanness, of standing to attention that Mæve associated with him was gone. He sprawled untidily; a cigarette hung loosely out of the corner of his mouth.

"Oh, yes," Annie was saying with a toss of her head, "you can talk like that. Talkin's easy. But sometimes when I think of you out with her every day an' the Lord only knowin' where you are an' what you're doin'——"

He burst into a loud guffaw. "Now, 'aven't I told you, Annie," he said, "time an' time again that you're the only girl I've ever loved?"

His accent and tone were as uncultured as hers. Like many of his class, he could imitate his employers' accent to perfection, but only troubled to do so when he was in their presence.

"Yes," said Annie peevishly again, "that's all very well. But she's prettier than what I am. She's a beauty wiv 'er dark eyes an' white skin an'—an' 'er sad looks. Any man'd fall in love with her."

George spoke contemptuously.

"I wouldn't for one. There isn't one of them swells I'd fall in love with—looks or no looks, an' I grant you she's a looker. But she's got no more spunk than the rest of 'em. She's engaged to Mr. Frewin——"

"I know she's engaged to Mr. Frewin. But you don't think I think that'd make any difference to you fallin' in love with 'er, do you? Go on! I know somethin' about men."

"Oh, shut up. I say she's engaged to this Frewin . . . why? . . . she don't love him."

"How'd you know? She told yer?"

"No. Anyone can see, anyone with eyes in their 'ead. She don't love him and she don't pretend to love him. Then why's she marryin' 'im? 'Cause she don't like 'er stepma. I don' blame 'er for *that*, but why go an' marry a man she don't love? It's not fair to 'im." He warmed to his theme. "That's the swells all over. What'd *you* do in 'er place? Marry a man you don' love jus' to live soft? No, you'd go an' get work an' live independent till you'd found a man you *did* love. But not the swells. No. They must always get some poor mut to keep 'em an' for very little thanks. I've no more use for 'er, I tell you, than I have for the rest of the swells."

"Yes, but I bet you've flirted with 'er," said Annie tartly.

He grinned.

"Well," he said, "I won't say I've not. But they expect it, the swells. It's part of the job—same as cleanin' the brasswork."

Mæve stumbled away through the trees across the dark patch of shade and the bright pools of moonlight.

She was white to the lips. She felt that her heart was broken, and yet she felt, too, that somehow, some way, if only one could look at it from the right angle, there was something comic about it. She felt that some time, perhaps years ahead, she would be able to see it as comic. She couldn't now. She only knew that her heart was broken. Yet George, while covering her with shame and misery, had let in a little ray of light upon the darkness. He'd told her what to do. He'd shown her the way. "Get work . . . live independent." That was what she'd do. . . . And if she couldn't get work . . . well, she'd starve. She'd rather starve, she thought with youth's ready tragic despair—for she was not yet twenty—than go on like this. She was still hot with the flush of shame that had surged over her as she listened to George. And then suddenly she thought of John. She was still engaged to John. John didn't know anything of all this. The first thing to do now was to find John. She felt suddenly exhausted. John had said he would come in that evening. She must catch him before he joined the others in the drawing-room. The drawing-room was full of people now—friends of Rosie's and her father's who had come from town by motor—a screaming crowd of half-dressed women and fatuous men. They would be sure to drink too much at dinner. She passed her hand over her brow. To her surprise that ecstasy of shame and misery

had passed. She felt now only stunned and weary. Then—she heard John's step on the gravel. She started up and went to him.

"Hello," he said, startled, as she appeared before him suddenly and as if by magic in the moonlight.

In silence she handed him her engagement ring.

His face hardened.

"What's that?" he said.

"I want—to—break it off. I don't want to marry you," she said unsteadily.

He spoke curtly.

"Why?"

"Because," she realised suddenly how hard it was going to be to tell him about George, "because," she hunted for words, "because of something I've just heard," she began, "and——"

He interrupted her.

"Something you've just heard," he repeated. "Very well. Let's leave it at that."

She felt dully surprised at the hardness of his voice. "You see——" She began again, but he interrupted again.

"Why tell me any more?" he said. "Let's leave it at that. You don't want to marry me. I give you back your promise."

"I'd like to explain——" she faltered.

She looked such a white, tired slip of a thing as she stood there in the moonlight, but his eyes did not soften.

"Why explain?" he said. "Explanations are so tiresome. I understand and I don't blame you. . . . Good-bye."

He turned on his heel and left her. She stood gazing after him, her eyes suddenly full of tears. He had always been so gentle, so kind. His curtness now when most she needed help had hurt her more than she would ever have believed it could.

But in a way, too, it made things easier for her. It cut a link that might have held her back. Better than if he had pleaded. Perhaps he had never really cared for her. Strange how that thought hurt. She went indoors, wrote a note to her father, and caught the next train to town.

There is a general unformulated idea abroad that all people have to have a certain amount—and only a certain amount—of ill-luck in their lives. Something the same idea as eating a peck of dirt before we die. Mæve had had her share early, and certainly the tide seemed to have turned as soon as she left the Manor. She spent the night at an hotel and the next morning bought a newspaper and began applying for posts. The first post she applied for was in a tiny and very select shop in Dover Street which had in its tiny and very select window one dress, a fan and a scarf. The proprietress was a girl not much older than Mæve, of good family and very companionable. She engaged Mæve chiefly because of her beauty and air of breeding, but one week told her that Mæve had remarkable talents for hard work and organisation, and a flair, unsuspected till now even by Mæve herself, for just the right touch on dress or cloak which marks it out as "chic." She took Mæve to share her flat and introduced her to her numerous friends. The little shop prospered. It became the fashion to dress at Estelle's. Mæve for the first time in her life had pretty dresses in plenty and engagements every night. Estelle's friends were young people in Society, and they "adopted" Mæve. To her surprise she found herself popular. And to Mæve life seemed to have begun afresh.

The old life of the Manor—Rosie, her father, George—was like a dim, unhappy dream, like something half remembered in a former life. She tasted the thrill of endeavour crowned with success, of popularity, of a good income earned by her own efforts. She learnt to be young and happy. And happiness suited her. Gradually the old bitterness left her and with it the old shrinking. She gained poise and self-assurance. She changed from a moonlight sprite to a beautiful woman. The years sped by—happy years full of work and enjoyment and freedom. The George affair took its true perspective in her life, as the calf-love of a repressed and lonely child. It was inevitable that she should have fallen in love with the first handsome young man she met, be he chauffeur or prince. She saw the affair merely as a comic episode. She told Estelle about it and they laughed over it. But John Frewin, though she had not seen him since she left the Manor, obstinately refused to take his true perspective in her life. She had forgotten what George looked like. She would hardly have recognised him had she met him. But John—instead of fading away into the background of her mind as he should have done, John became a clearer and more vivid memory as the years sped by. She could call to mind every line on his thin, hatchet face, every gleam of his twinkling eyes.

When she was thinking of something entirely different the vision of his pleasant, kindly smile would come before her eyes, blotting



"Mæve stood suddenly in the doorway, wrapped in her cloak, unsmiling, pale."

out everything else. She would sometimes remember little services he had done for her when she was a child, which at the time she had hardly noticed. And she still felt the hurt that his abrupt acceptance of her dismissal of him had dealt her, still resented the fact that his sympathy had failed her when most she needed it. . . . Though she had not seen nor heard of him since she left the Manor, John refused to belong to the old life. He invaded the new one.

He refused to be a comic episode of her girlhood. Instead he became, quite against her will, a stronger and yet stronger memory. Of course she had proposals in plenty. Estelle's circle was a wide one, and Mæve's beauty and charm attracted men. She refused many eligible *partis*. It annoyed her to have to do so. She wished honestly that she could fall in love with one of them. She wanted to exorcise this ghost in her heart, to kill this insistent memory that would wander so out of its place in her life. It was absurd, she told herself impatiently, it was impossible to fall in love with the memory of a man when she hadn't been in love with the man.

It was at a party given by a friend of Estelle's that she noticed a girl whose likeness to John brought a sharp pang to her heart. She hesitated a minute, then went across to her.

"You remind me so much," she said gently, "of a man I once knew called John Frewin."

"He's my cousin," said the girl.

"It's years since I met him," said Mæve, as if with gentle detached interest. "How is he?"

"Oh, all right—now. He came an awful cropper financially some years ago. I suppose you heard?"

"No—never."

"It was five or six years ago. People thought it was a real crash, but it wasn't as bad as he thought at the time, and he's worked things round till they're all serene again."

"Is he married?"

"No. He was engaged once. I never met the girl, I'm glad to say. She was a neighbour of his down in Hampshire."

The colour had left Mæve's face. She was trembling. But her voice was well under control.

"Why do you say you're glad you never met the girl?" she asked gently.

"She must have been a little cat," said the girl; "she threw him over as soon as she heard he'd lost his money. She must have felt sick when she heard afterwards that he'd got it back again."

Mæve bit her lips to steady them, then said in a low voice, "Are you sure of that?" and added with an attempt at lightness, "It sounds so incredible."

"It's quite true. She broke it off the day the first rumour got about. He was going to her house to tell her himself and to offer her her freedom, but she met him and told him that she knew and gave him back her ring——" She broke off with sudden compunction. "I say—you don't look well."

"It's the heat," said Mæve faintly. "I think I'll go home."

She refused all offers of escort and went home alone. Her pulses were throbbing in her ears. So that was what he thought of her. . . . That was how he remembered her all these years . . . as a heartless parasite who'd have taken all he could give her, but who threw him over when she heard he'd nothing to give. . . . She saw it all now clearly. "It's something I heard this afternoon. . . ." Oh, why hadn't he asked her what she'd heard . . . why hadn't she insisted on telling him? . . . She felt sick with shame and humiliation. That he should think that of her. And suddenly she felt that she couldn't bear his thinking that of her one moment longer. She must go to him at once and tell him. Her pride was nothing, nothing. There was nothing in her heart but shame and love.

He heard the car come up the gravel of the drive and wondered who could be coming to call on him at that hour. Then he heard the sound of her voice and the colour flooded his face, then receded, leaving it a white mask. She stood suddenly in the doorway, wrapped in her cloak, unsmiling, pale.

"Mæve!" he said.

"I had to come," she said breathlessly. "I've only just heard . . . what you thought of me . . . I had to tell you what really happened——"

Her newly-found poise and assurance had dropped from her. She was again the moonlight sprite, the proud, white, unhappy child he had known years ago. . . . She told him everything . . . of George and Annie and the words that had sent her on her quest, "You'd go and get work and live independent."

She thought that he would laugh at her, but he didn't. His eyes were tender and full of understanding—just as she remembered them.

"I was a fool," he said at the end. "I should have known you better."

"How you must have hated me all these years," she breathed.

He smiled—a rather twisted smile.

"I haven't hated you," he said.

She looked at him and saw something in

his eyes that made her catch her breath. She was silent.

"Why did you come to tell me this?" he said.

Her eyes met his unflinchingly.

"Because I couldn't bear you to think that I was—like that."

"Why couldn't you bear me to think that you were—like that?"

She didn't answer. Her eyes, big and dark and shadowed, were fixed on his face. How it had lived in her memory, every line of it . . . how beloved it was . . . how little it had changed in these years . . . still kind and gentle and understanding.

"Why couldn't you bear me to think that you were—like that?" he said again.

Still she did not answer. Her hand had crept to her breast. He looked at her and she saw hope spring suddenly to birth in his eyes.

"Mæve," he said wonderingly, incredulously, "can it be that——"

It was bliss to yield at last to what she had struggled against all these years.

"Yes, it's that," she said.

A PRAYER.

O! LET me love what I behold,
Draw peace from beauty and give back
Unto my fellows, young or old,
The peace that they may lack,

So from the sight of buds unfurled
And from the sound of all that sings
To find the darkness of the world
A-throb with angel wings.

We are drawn up to what we love;
We reach the height of our belief,
nd faith within the heart can move
The mountains of our grief.

And each may find a tongue of gold,
A hand to touch the strings aright,
If we can make his heart behold
Beauty the infinite.

For man unto the stars may go
Although his feet be clogged with mire,
And pluck the world's rude harp and know
That God has tuned the wire.

WILFRID THORLEY.



WEEK-END Ggolf.



THAT SPRING FEELING.

SHOP WALKER: Perhaps you would like to rest in the new lounge while Madam is making her purchases?

HUSBAND: Rest? How can I rest when I don't know what she's buying?

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

A RUINED REPUTATION.

By T. Hodgkinson.

MILLICENT has been clever with her needle ever since that childhood's day when she found that, failing a knife, it could be used for extracting pennies from most patterns of money-box.

From hemstitch to operating upon a blister there is no form of needlecraft at which she is not adept. To see her turning a bath mat sides to middle and coming out without a splash is to realise that art knows no limits.

I am, of course, very proud of possessing a combined partner, home dressmaker and invisible mending company on the premises, but the knowledge of Millicent's prowess is not confined to me. It is known throughout the neighbourhood, thanks mainly to Mrs. Mugworthy.

Mrs. Mugworthy's speciality is daily charing, and while she daily chars she talks. Not to employ her means missing half the inside information of the district. From her, as she toils, one hears how Mrs. Brown has installed a gas iron and Mrs. Robinson at Chez Nous renovated the whatnot with bees' wax and willpower. And Mesdames Brown and Robinson in their turns hear how Millicent has performed some new prodigy of embroidery in the shape of curtains, cushion covers, or cami-bockers for the aspidistra pots.

Millicent is Mrs. Mugworthy's favourite client. My old clothes fit her husband so nicely. They may, thanks to Millicent's care, be a bit older than those of my neighbours before they reach him, but, even so, they are in a far neater state of repair. None of the rents the envious rosebush made are ever noticeable, and from sheer gratitude she has always been ready to tell the world, pausing in her task but continuing to charge by the hour, that Millicent is a lady wot is a lady.

But now our era of free advertisement has ended. From a lady Millicent has become a mere woman in the opinion of her former champion, and the irony of it is that Mrs. Mugworthy herself is really responsible for the

change. On her last visit to us the lamp-shades happened to be down for renovation, and with her customary affability she remarked upon the fact.

"I suppose you'll soon be making some of these 'ere new fashionable ones, Mum," she remarked incidentally.

Millicent had not heard of these, and Mrs. Mugworthy proudly quoted her daily paper as the authority for the statement that the shades of the moment are made of tweed.

"Easier to make than them silk ones," was her opinion, and Millicent agreed. Already she had seen how they could be economically constructed, and the very next day she put the matter in hand.

Mrs. Mugworthy was loud in her admiration of them at first. They only showed, she declared, what you can do if you're clever. But all her admiration has vanished since she received the last consignment of my discarded raiment.

"Mean," is her description of Millicent's behaviour, "real mean"; and I am inclined to agree with her.

It isn't treating her husband with proper respect expecting him to walk about in raiment from which the vital and less opaque portions have been removed to make our new lamp-shades.

As Mrs. Mugworthy says, "'Ow would she like it 'erself?"

RODDO.

By E. H. Lacon Watson.

SACCHARISSA must be, I suppose, about our fifth dog. I have nothing much to say against her, except that she has always been of a rather melancholy disposition. Normally, these dogs that we secure from the renowned establishment south of the river are slightly melancholy at the beginning of their career with us. Perhaps they feel the shadow of that lethal chamber, which they skirted so narrowly, still hanging over them. But give them a week or so in our cheerful presence, and insensibly they take on an air of sprightliness. At least, all our former four have done so: it was left to Saccharissa (known as "Sacks" for short) to disturb us with this pestilent and persistent sadness.

When she wants anything (and it seems to me that every moment of the day brings, for Saccharissa, its unsatisfied desire) she does not ask for it boldly: she whines, whimpers, or moans as if in pain. When we had her first she used to sit and shiver, looking pathetically up at Phyllis with her brown eyes, now and then uttering sounds as of protest against a life that was all but unbearable.

"What *does* she want?" Phyllis would say, almost in despair. "I've never had a dog like this before. Do you think it's distemper?"

"These wire-haired terriers are always like that, more or less," I said. "Give her time,



CANDOUR.

INTERVIEWER: And what do you consider is the great secret of your success in business, sir?

SUGAR KING (of humble origin): *Grit*, my boy—just *grit*!

and see what happens. Probably she's too highly strung, like most of her sex."

"If she'd only ask for things, in a reasonable way——" said Phyllis, implying that then we might know how to treat the disease. For our former dogs had very soon become adepts at letting us know what they wanted. Blake (something of an Aberdeen) had a special bark for his various wants. At least Phyllis said he had: she asserted that he had an unmistakable note when he wanted to go out, quite different from the sound he made when he wished to be let in. Christina (traces of a fox-terrier) carried the business a stage further: she had her own way of demanding food. When hungry she stood dog. What she wanted really was a little Spartan neglect.

The fact was, I knew Roddo well.

I forget which of our many friends it was who introduced this canine nostrum into our household, but whoever it may have been I bear him (or her) a grudge. Roddo is one of the most powerfully smelling compounds known (if indeed it is known) to the British Pharmacopœia. It is a dark, treacly liquid, and when you open the bottle it is as though you had stepped into a factory of disinfectants that had been newly painted. It is so strong that Phyllis prefers to tie a handkerchief over her face when the time comes to administer it. I should say that



DISTRESS AT THE DOOR.

MAID: There's a gentleman to see you, sir.
VICAR: Who is it, Mary?
MAID: Please, sir, 'e says 'e's the suffering bishop.

would sit in front of Phyllis, fix upon her a pair of bright, beady eyes, and yawn. Yawn persistently and continuously, until something had to be done about it, or we should all catch the infection.

"We shall have to give her Roddo, I suppose," Phyllis said at last.

"Oh, let her alone a bit longer," I suggested. "Probably she'll be all right in a week or so."

"I hate to see them in pain," said Phyllis, who has a tender heart, where the lower animals are concerned.

I tried to persuade her that we had no evidence that Saccharissa was in actual pain. Probably she merely made these noises in order to attract attention. She imagined herself a misunderstood dog. What she wanted really was a little Spartan neglect.

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The proprietors maintain that as a general tonic for the whole canine race it stands alone. Judging from the directions, in small print on the outside of the bottle, there is no known ailment in the kennel that will stand up for long against Roddo. Even when there is no specific trouble, a course of the medicine is held to make the animal more lively, to infuse spirit into its gambols.

That is all very well. The administration is where the real trouble begins.

"It will be perfectly easy with Saccharissa," said Phyllis. "She's not snappy, like Christina."



MASTER: Were you fired from your last place?
NEW MAID: Yes, they insulted me and I went like a shot.

held, and her mouth to be opened, with scarcely a protest. I do not say that she swallowed all the spoonful, but she got more than most of her predecessors.

The worst of Roddo is that the treatment has to be continued for so long a time. Every morning for ten days, say the instructions, then an interval of a day or two, and then resume until the animal is cured. I do not blame the proprietors of the medicine, who naturally want to sell as many bottles as possible, but it does interfere rather seriously with my work. For Saccharissa, I regret to say, did not improve as she went on. The second morning I had some difficulty in finding her when the time came for medicine: the third day we had quite a long hunt (mobilising the entire resources of the household) before she was discovered hiding in the tool-house at the bottom of the garden. She positively hated that spoon: when she saw it coming she would wriggle into any sort of position rather than have its contents poured down her throat. Generally she contrived to choke as it went down: after the operation she almost invariably had a fit of coughing. I do not think much of the dose got really home.

"I don't know that I blame her," I said. "The smell of the stuff is nearly too much for me, so soon after breakfast. Don't you think we might give her a rest for a bit now?"

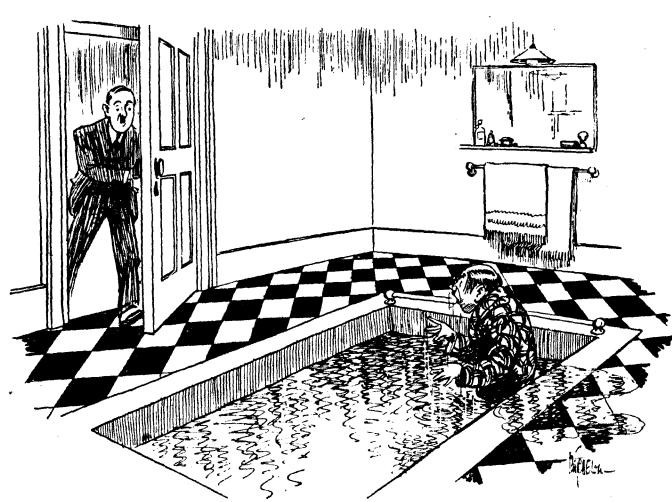
But Phyllis was of opinion that it was really doing her good. It was a sign of improvement, she maintained, that the dog had actually begun to struggle a bit lately.

Perhaps not. Nor, I admit, was she fierce, after the fashion of Blake. This administration of Roddo to our dogs has been one of the minor curses of my life for many years. It is a four-handed job: there have been occasions when six hands have not been too many. Normally, however, it is my part to secure the animal, hold him firmly with the right hand and gently open the mouth with my left. Then Phyllis, approaching stealthily with the bottle, a spoon, and a few deceitful words, attempts to pour a dose of the mixture down the animal's mouth. What happens generally is that the dog struggles with great violence, upsets most of the liquid over my trousers or the dining-room carpet, and escapes with only a small portion of the dose well home. Blake generally contrived to bite the hand that attempted to hold him as well. And then, of course, there were recriminations.

"You might have managed to hold him quiet for one moment longer," Phyllis would say while I was binding up my wrist. "Now we shall have to do it all over again. And just look at the carpet."

I used to find this sort of thing quite fatal to my morning's work. When at last I escaped to my own room I was sore in mind and body, in the worst possible frame of mind for the management of a saleable love-story. I had to tell Phyllis after some time that I simply could not continue. She would have to abate her enthusiasm for medical treatment.

But Saccharissa would be different, it was true. Phyllis pointed out to me that she had not the spirit to struggle. As for biting, one might as well expect to be bitten by a sheep. And it is true that the first day she allowed herself to be



HOST: Did you call out, old chap?
COUNTRY GUEST (in very modern bathroom): Yes, I've gone and got myself soaking wet in this hole looking for the bath.

HEALTH CAME WITH CASSELL'S TABLETS



Read what she says:

"I had suffered for years with severe indigestion. The pain I endured sometimes was so severe that I felt afraid to eat anything. Wind came in volumes, and splitting headaches hardly ever ceased. I was dreadfully nervous, and I never knew what it was to have a real night's rest. Often a faint feeling came over me, and after meals I went dizzy; the complaint was taking the life out of me. One day my sister urged me to take Cassell's Tablets, and I took her advice, for I began to improve from the first dose. I could sleep, my appetite improved and I could eat without having to suffer. Now I feel really well and strong."—Mrs. C. Rex, 4, Charlotte Terrace, Barnsbury, N.1.

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KEEP well and happy! Health and high spirits depend greatly on plenty of nerve-strength, and a good digestion. Nervy and dyspeptic people usually become dull, irritable and listless. Ask yourself: Do you feel tired out in the middle of the morning? Do your nerves feel on edge? Do you have sleepless nights? Do you suffer from indigestion, flatulence or sickness? If you do, it is obvious that you are in need of a tonic—such as Cassell's.

Nourishes the Nerves, Strengthens the Digestion, Enriches the Blood.

Mrs. Rex is one of the thousands of women who have found new health and happiness in Cassell's Tablets. Let them do the same for you. Start a course this very day!

Cassell's contain special nerve foods, digestive correctives, and blood nutrients, which repair the damage done to your nerves and digestion by overwork or worry, the rush and noise of modern life, or by the many devitalised foods we eat.

FOR INSOMNIA, ANÆMIA, HEADACHES, NEURASTHENIA, BREAKDOWN, NEURALGIA, FLATULENCE, INDIGESTION, PALPITATION AND ALL NERVE AND DIGESTIVE COMPLAINTS.

THE SAFE AND SURE REMEDY IS:—

CASSELL'S TABLETS

She struggled so hard, in fact, the next morning that she made Phyllis drop the bottle. Most of the stuff went over the daily paper, which we had carefully spread over the floor to save the carpet. Some went over Phyllis's silk stockings.

The smell in the room was something appalling. There were a few swift words, and Phyllis went hastily upstairs to change into a new pair.

I released Saccharissa. With the curiosity of her sex she began to investigate the mess. Something about the smell seemed to attract her. She advanced a tongue. She began to lick. In a few minutes she had removed almost all the Roddo from the outside page of the paper.

"You may as well clean the carpet now," I said.

And she set to work on that as well.

Now we pour a little Roddo into a saucer in the morning, and she laps it down like a lamb. But I confess I feel a grievance when I watch her. How many peaceful mornings had been destroyed for me before a mere accident pointed out this simple way! And I have no doubt whatsoever that all the other beasts would have lapped it up in the same way if we had given them the chance. What they did not like—and very naturally—was having their mouths held open and the stuff poured down their throats.

THE EGG PROBLEM.

By Margaret Mawson.

"HULLO," I said as I saw Dobbs buying a *Poultry Weekly* at the station bookstall, "taken to poultry farming?"

"Not I," he replied gloomily. "It's my wife"; and as we travelled home together he told me the whole story.

A few weeks ago Mrs. Dobbs decided to keep hens in their small garden at the back of the house. Dobbs had been delighted and the first day he had enjoyed a couple of new-laid eggs for breakfast.

"Nothing like a really fresh egg," he had remarked, and unfortunately his wife took him at his word and ever since she had given him eggs for breakfast. Each day his enjoyment lessened till he loathed the sight of them. True, they were cooked in different ways.

"They may look different, but they taste the same," groaned Dobbs.

Mrs. Dobbs herself did not have them, as she is one of those people who eat a little dry toast for breakfast. She looks like it too.

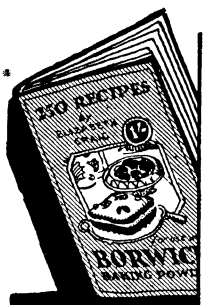
You will wonder why he did not tell her he wanted a change, but if you knew Mrs. D. you wouldn't wonder. If anyone had criticised her housekeeping she would have had what those psychology people call a complex, which would have lasted for a month; besides, Dobbs is one of those worms who never turns and whom everyone uses as a doormat. At least, you can't



THE NEW COOK.

"Does your new cook seem to have a more even temper than the last?"
"More even?—Even more!"

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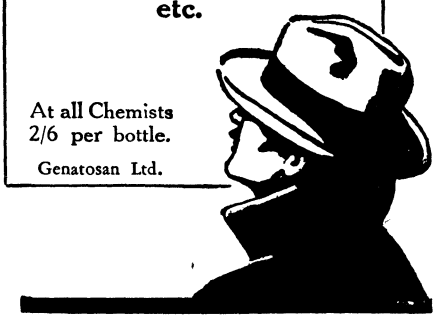
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(*Dr. Sechehaye in the "Swiss Medical Review."*)

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(*Dr. Grun in the King's Bench Division.*)

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DELICIOUS FRENCH COFFEE.

RED WHITE & BLUE

For Breakfast & after Dinner.

In making, use LESS QUANTITY, it being much stronger than ORDINARY COFFEE.

exactly use a worm as a doormat, but you know what I mean.

Anyhow, he hated "those beastly birds," as he called them, and was trying to find out how to stop them laying, and that was why he was buying the *Poultry Weekly* when I met him.

For several weeks he had been reading such articles as: "Egg Production. How to increase it," so that he could learn how to do the opposite.

"Have you done anything?" I asked.



"Nothing that was any good," he grumbled. "Among the 'Answers to Correspondents' I read that too much Indian corn would stop them laying, so I bought some. Whenever the wife is out of sight I gorge them with it. They certainly aren't laying so well, but they still lay enough for my breakfast."

He relapsed into gloom and began to read his weekly. He would be one of England's leading business men if he used half the concentration in his business that he used on that paper.

"Ah!" he exclaimed suddenly, and read aloud: "'Avoid frightening the birds, as this may prevent them laying.' I'll give them the fright of their lives."

He did not know how he was going to do it, and when we parted I called after him:

"Eggs are full of vitamins."

He snorted.

I was glad to meet him a fortnight later, walking with a jaunty air, and looking like Christian when his burden rolled off his back.

"Solved the egg problem?" I asked.

"Yes. Thank goodness!" and he chuckled. "For a long time I wondered how to give those birds a fright and then I thought of fireworks. Every morning I got up early and let one off in the henhouse."

"Didn't Mrs. Dobbs hear it?"

"No. She's a grand sleeper and our room is at the front. I had to risk that. Well," continued Dobbs, "one day I put a large squib ready to light and then found I had no matches. When I came back with a box one of the hens was eating the firework."

"It died, I suppose?" I remarked.

"No. She did something better than that—she laid an egg." He began to laugh.

"Get on with the story," I urged.

He continued:

"Next morning I overslept and was awakened by a bang, followed by a crash. I rushed into the kitchen and found my wife smothered in egg. I never realised before (though I know something about eggs) what a lot of egg there is in one shell. She had dropped the frying-pan and her shoes were covered with bacon fat. The cat was in a corner enjoying a piece of bacon between the intervals of washing pieces of egg-shell out of its fur."

"What had happened?" I said.

When he could stop laughing he went on:

"The jolly old hen had somehow managed to transfer the gunpowder from the squib to the egg, and when it was broken into the frying-pan, it exploded."

"It doesn't matter how much I want an egg now, the wife daren't cook one. Do you know of anyone who wants to buy half a dozen hens?"

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SCOTSMAN: I think about 1911 or 1912.



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TED: Sure, but I couldn't use them.

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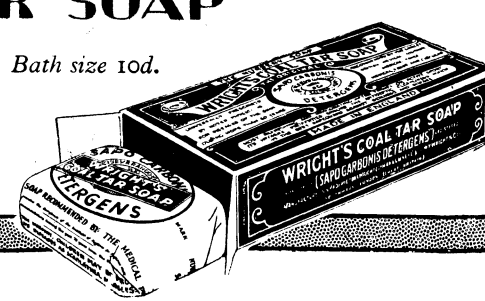
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[E. N. A.

GENERAL PRIMO DE RIVERA.

THE WANING POWER OF PARLIAMENTARY DEMOCRACY

By GENERAL PRIMO DE RIVERA[1]

Recent events in Spain and the near approach of our own General Election lend special interest to this important statement. "The Windsor," however, has no politics, and it must not be assumed that we either agree or disagree with what is said.

IT is not very easy to speak of one's own efforts. I am reminded of the shrewd phrase of Pascal—"Le moi est haïssable." Therefore I will refrain from talking too much of myself. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that the dictatorship in Spain has given very good results, so that a too great modesty would be out of place. I do not consider the success obtained as my own, but as being that of the regime, of a system of government. This success is in the first place due to the cleverness and the zeal of my eminent collaborators. Therefore one might more correctly call this article "The success of the dictatorship in Spain."

Those who are living in Spain know very well that even my worst enemies do not deny that the dictatorship was welcome from the point of view of public order and of national economy. As a matter of fact, when we took the administration from the powerless hands of the old regime, certain regions of the country, especially Catalonia, were submitted to real terrorism. In the course of two years there were in Barcelona more than 600 murders of a social character. Naturally, this state of affairs did much to paralyse economic expansion, and also to diminish the prestige of our country abroad. But it was necessary to be energetic in order to obtain a quick return to normality. Terrorism has now completely ceased, and to-day Barcelona is as quiet as any other town of a civilised country.

Another great obstacle to progress, which we were determined to overcome, was the Moroccan war. The entire life of the nation —its finances, its prosperity, its tranquillity —was subordinated to the whims of Abd-el-Krim. This little tribal chief acquired, through the weakness of our rulers, an international importance. He was negotiated with as a State Chief, and certain foreign newspapers even conferred upon him the title of "Majesty." A few months before our *coup* the Spanish Government was obliged to pay to Abd-el-Krim the sum of 5 million pesetas for the liberation of our prisoners. A big deficit revealed in our budget the existence of a colonial adventure which our Governments did not have the strength to put to an end.

What the parliamentary democracy was not able to do the dictatorship did. The Moroccan war has been ended, and Morocco to-day is no longer a nightmare for Spain; the expenses on the country are normal and do not adversely influence our budget; the Expedition troops have been repatriated, and Morocco is as safe for the traveller as Spain. Morocco's natural riches have, as a consequence, become available to our engineers, and the Rif iron mines are being exploited under the best conditions. In the centre of the Rif a new town, "Villa Sanjurjo," has arisen with a rapidity which would surprise even the Western States of America. Even for the sake of the many thousands of Spanish mothers who found again their sons safe and sound, the mere victorious termination of the Morocco war justifies our dictatorship.

Fortunately, the re-establishment of public order, the respect of laws, and the victory of Morocco, were not the only successes the dictatorship has achieved. A considerable reduction of public expenses has been

[1] In an interview.

effected, our general budget no longer shows a deficit, and there is no need to have recourse to short-dated loans, which are always somewhat humiliating for a Government. Our young and expert Finance Minister, Don José Calvo Sotelo, has consolidated our floating debt and has relieved the Treasury of a problem which formerly occupied much of its attention.

As for our international position, who can deny that Spain enjoys to-day a higher prestige than six or seven years ago? I do not say that we are feared—I do not want that; but it is certain that we are more respected. At the League of Nations we occupy an honourable seat, and maintain the best relations with all civilised nations. We have strengthened our connections with Spanish-America, not only from the cultural, but also from the economic point of view; to that effect we have created the "Banco Exterior."



[*Nieto, Madrid.*

ANOTHER PORTRAIT OF THE SPANISH "DICTATOR."

The economic life of our nation progresses with rapidity. We have an active Minister of "Fomento," the engineer Count of Guadalhorce, who never cared about politics, but who is a real poet of material progress. He is building roads and bridges, reconstructing plantations, draining the marshes, electrifying the railways, increasing productivity of the soil—and, in a word, developing a marvellous activity the results of which are already becoming manifest in the exchange value of the peseta.

The Minister of Public Instruction and Arts, Professor Eduardo Callejo, is working on his side with much zeal for the improvement and extension of education. We are determined to dispense with all expensive and bad text-books; we shall introduce into every school the best teaching books, selected by a competent committee from works presented in public competition. We have also decided to put to an end within reasonable time the analphabetism which is still the shame of some regions of our country. As a matter of fact, in the educational domain we are progressing so quickly that I believe that before many years have passed foreigners will not recognise our country.

I could prolong this interview considerably, for in all fields we have obtained a measure of success which appears incredible in view of the fact that we have been in power for only a little more than five years. I have not exaggerated our achievements; in fact, I have deliberately under-estimated our progress. From the material point of view our success cannot be denied, even by those who condemn dictatorial methods on political grounds.

MR. BUFFUM VISITS MONTE CARLO

By HUGH DE SÉLINCOURT

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

MR. BUFFUM had been most reluctant to accept Niece Lucia's urgent invitation to come to the South of France and join the party she was with at the Villa Bachlyk. The timid old Sussex sheep, he wrote, would be quite out of place flaunting about at his time of life on the Riviera with rich Americans. But he came. The delight of feeling wanted was too much for him. He bought a new blue suit and came.

And here he actually stood, after many adventures, smiling in the happy sunshine on the platform of Cap d'Ail.

A small boy home for the holidays was like a bald sophisticated Cambridge don compared with Mr. Buffum, as Niece Lucia and her friend Miss Marion led him, each by an arm, to the capacious Delaunay-Belleville. After a winding, steep, chattering little drive they stopped before the tall iron brass-tipped gates of the Villa Bachlyk. Through plate-glass doors framed in iron-work tipped with gay brass, over marble floors into a domed hall—more like a Moorish palace than a house—Mr. Buffum passed and found himself in a marble-floored salon with large windows looking out upon the blue Mediterranean. He found himself shaking the small bangled hand of his American hostess—Mrs. Manning Bruce—and heard her slow voice say, "Now isn't it real nice to be seeing you at last!"

Mr. Buffum had pictured her in his mind as a substantial motherly woman: to cross the Atlantic, to cross Europe, and to take and run an establishment so far from home in so foreign a country needed genuine body of character: but he was doomed, it seemed, always to be mistaken. Mrs. Manning Bruce was if anything slimmer and flimsier than Niece Lucia; not so compact: she floated, as she introduced him to two diaphanous beings, known as Millie and Fudge, who gave the tiniest curtsey over Mr. Buffum's hand, murmuring "Pleased to meet you" and thereby winning his heart at once.

He was sat down in a window-seat. A turn of his head showed the incredible blue sea playing against the rock upon which the villa had been constructed: these incredible beings fluttered round him, waiting on him with a cocktail, a cigarette, a match . . . and without any pronounced Mohammedan tendency Mr. Buffum felt admitted to some sort of dream Paradise. His cheeks began to ache with his large perpetual smile. He was too hugely, too massively entertained to try himself to be entertaining. It was very nice, very, very nice. All to himself, too.

Mr. Buffum disapproved of any woman making up her face, and he thought the process silly for a young girl as well as wrong. These dear young things, however, wore masks adroitly made by face cream and powder, and sticks for lip and eyebrow: they tried their dear little bests to look like seasoned Parisian cocottes, but succeeded only, he noted with pleasure, in looking like the baby dolls which they had but lately left behind them in their nurseries. After all, they were wearing such skimpy frocks that they no doubt felt they must cover their darling faces with something. They lolled with crossed legs, smoking Lucky Strikes, holding Venetian cocktail glasses in daintily manicured fingers—room-mates from Vassar, he gathered; little pets, he knew.

And then he spoke like one in a dream, without taking thought, voicing something which came up like a small bubble from a deep well: "I'm sure it's all quite wicked and quite wrong, but, oh dear! I do enjoy

it!" There was an instant clamour for Mr. Buffum to explain what IT meant, but he could only blush and wave his hand in an inclusive circle and beam. They were still pressing for explanation when he was led off to his room, and Mr. Buffum fondly hoped that the inconvenient start of his statement might be forgotten in the indubitable truth of its finish. But that was not to be. At luncheon, while he was enjoying food so delicious that it ought only to grace a feast or treat, and not to be taken ever as a routine meal, Miss Millie turned her exquisite little smiling mask and asked with shy innocence:

"What is all wicked and wrong, please, Mr. Buffum?"

And put the lipstick she was delicately applying to lips which food and drink had naturalised back into her naughty little vanity bag. He could not say, "You, dear child, from top to toe," as he thought; nor could he say, "And this luxurious food," as he also thought, with his kind hostess urging him to take more of the best coffee he had yet tasted in his life.

He felt quite pushed against the wall, as though a challenge casually dropped had been seriously accepted. His shy glance took in the smiling, intent faces waiting for his reply, round the lavish table in the fantastic, delightful, high Moorish dining-room opening out of the gay marble-paved salon, saw and heard in the moment's silence the blue sea on the rocks below outside in the streaming sunshine—and tried to wriggle out by murmuring through his smile:

"My being here at all, you know—the old Sussex sheep—so far from his pasture on the Downs." But Niece Lucia would not let him off; she wanted him to step right out, as it were, into the very middle of it, certain that the more he showed himself the greater would be his success: so she added demurely:

"Really, dear, it's you and Fudge and us he thinks wickedest and worst . . ."

To which Miss Marion added softly but very clearly: "And enjoys the most."

Mr. Buffum hastened to explain to his laughing hostess.

"You see, girls and . . . and . . . women and all that, they are so . . . so very different from when I was a young man . . . No one can help having ideas, I mean, of his own, you know, and I'm quite, oh! quite, an old fogey."

The remark declared and established Mr. Buffum. His attitude became a standing jest of the party, to which he never failed most delightfully to rise.

Millie and Fudge teased him outrageously; and the more they teased him the better Mr. Buffum liked it. Miss Marion and Niece Lucia became, by comparison, elderly sensible friends, to whose companionship he retired for rest and comfort from the little mischiefs.

So towards dinner-time on the first day, after a stroll along the rocky coast, Mr. Buffum felt that he had known them all for years. But when he went to dress for dinner he entered into a private realm of extreme difficulty.

After his terrible experience of the night in the Blue Train and his wonderful awakening he had been carried along on a wave of excitement clean out of his own small world of careful habit: but a man of his years does not, of course, change his disposition in a couple of days, and he found himself landed very high and very dry in his bedroom on a rocky set of circumstances, his shyness stripped and bare, and he felt suddenly unable to cope with the novelty of the situation, to which he now rated himself for having given no previous thought.

He was not accustomed to dress for dinner at home, where, with the help of kind Eliza, he at any rate knew where his shirt and collar and coat and trousers could be found. Donning his dress suit was always something of a ceremony for which his whole friendly household remained within call to lend a kindly hand. Now he remembered with dismay that he had in thoughtless folly handed the key of his trunk to a foreign maid, and goodness only knew in what drawers and cupboards she had bestowed his attire. Finding things was not among his gifts. It was 7.35, the minutes were ticking by, dinner was at 8. He stroked his chin and it was borne in upon his deep anxiety that he badly needed a shave.

Mr. Buffum shook off the torpor of bewilderment that is prone to sap a shy man's power of action, plucked up spirit, pulled off his coat and waistcoat, loosened his braces, took off his collar and tie, and like a brave and resolute man began to search for his shaving things. But he searched in vain. He moved everything on the washstand and found no trace of soap or brush: he forced open the reluctant drawer with extreme difficulty to no purpose;



"At length he summoned up sufficient spirit to stroke his cheek with his forefinger, to nod and murmur 'shaving things.'"

which made him sweat so much that he felt the need of a bath. He stood looking wildly round the strange bedroom, feeling in a nightmare game of hunt the thimble in which his whole reputation and personal dignity were at stake: tall curtains hung before high windows; he rushed towards them and snatched them to one side, but each window-sill was bare. His trousers kept slipping down. He was not dressed for a hunt.

Mr. Buffum was furtively examining his face in the wardrobe mirror to see how badly he really did require a shave when the door was brightly tapped and opened, and through the opening a pleasant girl's

voice spoke what Mr. Buffum failed to understand. He could neither say "Entrez!" nor "Getawez!" He was in France, land of seduction, and the South of France, at that. Mr. Buffum quailed as the Swiss maid entered with perfect unconcern and closed the door respectfully behind her.

She tried fluent French, she tried fluent German, but though Mr. Buffum had been to quite a good school, her words had no meaning. Perhaps this was the fault of her Swiss accent; or it may have been that every movement, every gesture, every glance spoke a language of innocent coquetry which dimmed his pure English mind to her simple words of apology for being late in putting out his clothes. Mr. Buffum had learned far more than he realised from his severely middle-class upbringing, in which mere grammar was a small item compared with the numerous moral advantages under which he now sat diminished.

He sat limply on the edge of the bed, watching her, astonished. At length he summoned up sufficient spirit to stroke his cheek with his forefinger, to nod and murmur "shaving things": immediately to become alarmed that his innocent dumb show had been misconstrued by her wicked foreigninity, for she approached him with a bewildered look upon her pretty face, searching his features with her bold eyes, then soundlessly clapped her hands and brightened, tripping towards a second door, beckoning him to follow—which he humbly, fearfully did, hands in pockets acting as braces to his sagging trousers. There lay his shaving kit long sought, in a perfectly appointed bathroom, containing many contrivances for washing: nor did his total ignorance of their proper usage add to his self-esteem.

Mr. Buffum waited in the bathroom, but as the kind girl showed no sign of departure from his bedroom, he turned on hot water in the basin and began to lather his sad face, remembering too late that no wise man attempts to shave in braceless unbelted trousers that are on the ample side, unless he can be seated before a looking-glass.

As he lathered, he wracked his brain for a form of dismissal to the kind girl; he did not wish to be curt or rude: still less did he wish to be in the least encouraging. *Allez vous en* might hurt her feelings: *vous pouvez vous aller vous en* might have a double meaning, or possibly none, which would lead him into the devious path of explanation, which he was not dressed to follow.

Lathered, he stepped through the bedroom door. The room seemed empty: he advanced to make sure.

And worse—incredibly worse—befell him, in one swift horrible second. Scuffling footsteps—the bang of the other bathroom door—laughing low voices—"Coast's clear." "Sure?" "Oh, yes, he's gone down." "Hurry, then!" A prompt "No! I am here" might have saved the situation, which hesitation lost.

And the communicating door was slightly open, he observed to his horror. He stood still as a guilty mouse. He had been told and he had quite forgotten that Millie and Fudge shared his bathroom. "Did he mind? These foreign villas had no accommodation: only two bathrooms upstairs!" Now at last he understood the full meaning of the words at which, when spoken, he had but vacantly smiled.

Water roared into the bath.

He licked his dry lips and tasted soap: ached to cough: feared to move. The water was turned off. One slapped the other. The slap was returned. Except for sight he was Peeping Tom; and he could not close his mind's eye. Tremendous splashings, "Must have a sponge down."

The soap dried on his drawn face.

"Oh, donkey, don't wet my hair."

Drying, they chattered about their lucky numbers—the lucky day for Monte Carlo. Mr. Buffum was grateful. Imagine what they might have chattered about, girls alone in a bath! "He's a lamb." "Turbly English." "The 'cutest thing." They mimicked the English voice; but Mr. Buffum could not recognise the imitation: he was too distressed no doubt to be fully appreciative. Supposing he had foreseen the plight he was now in, would he ever have left his quiet Sussex home? Never. Never. A voice within him cried. Vanity, sheer vanity, had lured him into this plight. He knew it now, as he stood supporting his loose trousers, fearful of exposure, with the drying soap tightening the skin on his face. Fancy him at his age wanting to cut a figure on the Riviera among wealthy people; fancy him hoping to break the bank at Monte Carlo. He saw himself now in a true light, a figure of fun, a ludicrous spectacle, not knowing the rudiments of decent behaviour. He could not even shut the door.

"Look sharp. We'll be ever so late!"

He'd better go to bed quietly: he could send a message that he was tired after the journey . . .

But the relief of hearing the outer door slam, the relief of the ensuing silence, gave him strength for action: he ran into the bathroom, locked the door; hurried back into his bedroom and locked that door too; shaved, washed, dressed in record time, and was ready when Niece Lucia tapped his door.

"Let's look at you, old man," she said, and retied his black tie. Then took his arm in the way he most appreciated and led him down to dinner, saying as she opened the enormous door in a swift whisper: "It just makes all the difference, having you here."

Miss Marion was in the room alone. They made him feel how much they liked him. Mr. Buffum purred like a stroked cat, and yet honesty forced him to confess, "I ought not really to be here," and honesty forced him to add at once, "I'm terribly pleased that I am."

As dinner proceeded (it *wasn't* right to have such cooking included in the home routine, but he relished it! Champagne poured into glasses too, with no explanatory word, like water) and as the talk touched and settled on lucky numbers, Mr. Buffum came to realise without contrition that the Casino at Monte Carlo was really the goal of this journey; all his life his mind had pictured it as the gayest, wickedest resort on earth, and now he was within reach he wanted to go there more even than to walk in the moonlight with Miss Marion, much more than to study the natural beauties of the coast, or to visit the museum at Monaco. The evening was spent in his being shown on a toy table the simple mysteries of roulette. His lucky number was worked out with elaborate care on a sheet of paper; from the day and year of his birth; every calculation proved his lucky number to be nine; the next day was the ninth!

With awed faces under their dolly masks Millie and Fudge announced: "We must sure go to-morrow." It was a marvellous coincidence: Fate ordained that Mr. Buffum should win huge sums. Mr. Buffum towered to heroic stature. The bank was as good as broken. He began to wonder in his kindly diffidence whether it was fair and permissible to profit by such an immense advantage; but he stilled his conscience by remembering that it was a public, not a private concern.

So this portentous visit was quietly arranged with all the ease of a visit to the cinema at Worthing, which Mr. Buffum occasionally patronised.

Alone, preparing to sleep, he of course smiled at his folly in catching the dear children's enthusiasm for a silly game and in being infected by their quaint belief in lucky numbers; but the lofty elderly smile did not touch or disturb a certain deep demure confidence that he would win: still less the excitement quivering within that he was actually going to enter the Casino at Monte Carlo.

The morning dragged for Mr. Buffum as slowly and aimlessly, in spite of the novelty and wonder of the place in which he awoke to still, streaming sunshine, as drags a small boy's morning on the day of his visit to the circus.

Millie and Fudge were lunching at Monaco, but they would quit early and meet the others on the steps of the Casino at three. They seemed to know their way about, as though the Riviera were a suburb of Vassar: and their dear dolly faces wore the intent determined look to be seen on the faces of aldermen and others about to take their place in the Lord Mayor's procession through London.

The drive to Monte Carlo, the sea front by the harbour, the steep harbour hill with its widening view of the coast, the mountain overhanging the cheerful town, the tall palm trees, the roses, bewildered Mr. Buffum: to see such things from the train was one thing, to move in their midst another: he could not escape from the fantastic dream sensation.

Millie and Fudge darted down the long white steps of the Casino like eager little birds. Had he remembered his passport? He had. Such a plan. . . . He was steered to the left to buy his entrance ticket. Strange liberties were taken with the sound of his name. Taken across to the right to watch his coat and hat disappear up a lift, and there he was at last actually walking without hat or overcoat, as though he were in his own house in Sussex, in the great hall of the Casino at Monte Carlo.

Mr. Buffum held his breath as he passed through the huge glass doors and entered the gaming-rooms. He tried to take in everything at once and saw nothing but a crowd that moved and sat and stood, in an oppressive atmosphere, unrelieved even by tobacco smoke.

So he clung on to his resolution not to

spend more than 250 francs on playing chips, while Millie and Fudge unfolded their plan in hushed excited voices. "Fifteen —tens—five twenties: *si vous plait*": and they were pushed across—thrilling heaps



—to be disposed in either trouser pocket.

At 3.27 exactly (all threes and nines) he must lay his first stake on 9 and could not fail to win—it was 3.20 now.

"*Messieurs faites vos jeux,*" came the monotonous cry from each table, as they wandered through the crowd, the clatter of the spinning ball, the clear unruffled announcement of the winning number. They took a stand by a table in a far room. Mr. Buffum's head span with excitement as he watched the black-coated keen-eyed croupiers pushing money about with their long sticks. What a number of quite elderly ladies! What were they doing scoring on cricket cards? Mr. Buffum stared round for a happy or excited face.

Dull shutters were everywhere up. Restraint? A seat was vacated. They sat him down on it.

"Not this time," Fudge whispered hoarsely in his ear.



"Mr. Buffum played again the same evening."

"*Messieurs faites. vos jeux.*" The eyes of the croupiers coldly pierced the newcomer. *Rien ne va plus.* There was a tense hush. An empty square on the green table was tapped—all the money was raked in, but a stake or two on red and even.

Mr. Buffum fumbled furiously in his trouser pocket, withdrew a piece: waited and at the earliest moment leaned eagerly forward and with trembling stretched fingers placed an English penny on his lucky number 9. He was hardly back in his chair

when angry astonished grunts, descending sticks, withering looks, apprised him of his error.

"Oh, I *am* sorry! What a silly mistake!" He gathered up with difficulty his poor little coin; the croupiers, unmoved, stared coldly through him. Mr. Buffum leaned forward, shaking now, to put a red 20-franc chip on 9. The ball span and rattled, *Rien ne va plus.* It stopped. *Huit* seemed to cut his ear. The square next his 9 was tapped. His red piece was nonchalantly scooped back.

"My! how nearly," Millie whispered in his ear: and Mr. Buffum knew quite for certain that 27 would turn up next. He watched the payments impatiently. Then pushed a 10-franc chip impatiently across the table, saying 27. *Vingt-sept,* interpreted Fudge. *Plein.* And the croupier jerked it without a smile on to the right square. The low numbers were heavily backed. The wheel was spun: the little ball leaped and rattled: *Rien ne va plus. Trent-trois.* "There! two threes," Fudge whispered, pressing his shoulder, and put a metal chip on odd.

Mr. Buffum put two red twenties on black, thinking it wiser to recoup himself before making another proper stake.

To his astonishment and disgust red and even turned up, and his 40 francs were raked in almost before he heard the number called. It was a shock to him. He hesitated. Decided to let the next turn pass. Admired his own wisdom and restraint. Listened with cold indifference to the firm command, *Messieurs faites vos jeux.* "Not this time, thank you," he quite haughtily thought. *Rien ne va plus! . . . Neuf,* and nine, his nine, was tapped, which someone else had backed. The imp of chance was simply spiting him. It was a personal affront. He glared round the table. No one took even a mild notice of his angry glare.

"Come on! Let's go to another!" Fudge whispered, pulling his arm. Mr. Buffum got up. He took out his watch, more to soothe his mind than to see the time. He started. It was 3.28. The little idiot's watch was fast. But it was her watch that was out, *not* his luck. Dear me! Dear me! He must not allow himself to become so venomously riled.

He asked her in a gentle voice the French for thirty-six and murmured *trente-six* softly aloud to himself to be ready for his next stake. "And what's that other thing? On horse back." "*A cheval.*" He had words to murmur. He had his little plan. He'd show them.

They stood by the seated croupier at the top of another table. Mr. Buffum surprised himself by the quiet manner he threw a metal 10-franc chip on the table and said *Trente-six plein* and another metal 10-franc chip saying *A cheval* and shuddered to hear the monotonous cry *Rien ne va plus* as the croupier was actually pushing his piece on the line. A sudden breath-catching, tightening stretch of every nerve in his body. Snap—*Trente-six*—His chip was tapped.

"That's me!" Mr. Buffum cried out in a loud voice, oblivious of the tired scornful eyes that were turned in his direction.

A cheval. A pleasant little pile of chips was being pushed towards him—in which was a large round red one for 100 francs. *Plein:* a pile twice the size he leaned over to gather up, containing two more large round reds.

"Give a twenty for the table," said Millie earnestly, and Mr. Buffum cast twenty francs on the green table with the casual ease of a lord.

He threw a hundred francs on the row 26–27–28 and waited strung up so tightly that his temples throbbed. *Rien ne va plus* stopped him from putting another red round on 27 full. *Vingt-six,* the voice of the croupier affected Mr. Buffum like a sharp blow on the stomach.

A pile of large red rounds was pushed towards him. He picked them up at last and turned away.

"You must go on," the girls cried, jumping about in excitement. But Mr. Buffum's eye fell on a man's face more drawn and white than he realised a human face could be. The man's jacket collar was buttoned up. You felt he had pawned his wife's nightgown for money. Mr. Buffum stared. The man staked 100 franc pieces on 20 in every possible way, and when he lost every stake, he staggered as under a too heavy blow. The cold eyes of the croupiers remained on him a little longer than was usual. Mr. Buffum was compelled to look. Again the man, white to his lips, backed 20 in the same reckless way with hundred pieces—even the eyes of a few seated players were turned for a moment in his direction. Mr. Buffum watched him fascinated, not hearing the complaining words of his little friends, not feeling their tugs at his sleeve,

glad that they did not seem to notice the terrible drawn-faced man by whose side an attendant happened now to be standing unpresumingly. *Rien ne va plus. Vingt.* The man gasped, bent, staggered, trembled . . . the shock of winning was greater than the shock of losing . . . then tightened to a tensity of control. He was partly paid in wads of notes.

"A little air," murmured Mr. Buffum to Millie and Fudge. "A little fresh air."

"But you ought never to leave your luck," they urged, and begged Niece Lucia and Miss Marion, who wandered up, to use their influence with him. Vermouth and a cigarette, they smiled, following Mr. Buffum, who walked ahead through the crowd strong in mind, though weak in knee.

Mr. Buffum, with a cooling drink that was new to him, and a cigarette, found their earnest prattle soothing: their cocktails, their cigarettes, their nonchalance at the Casino, their smartness of powder and lipstick and apparel no longer even mildly offended him: they moved unscathed through everything: or everything passed them by, and he was reminded of the dear child who most devoutly repeated at her kindergarten prayers:

> Our Father, which art in Heaven,
> Harold be thy name,

remembering her favourite among elder friends.

"It's almost too exciting for a Sussex sheep!" he pleaded against their desire to disturb too soon his enjoyment of the comfortable chair he occupied.

"We'll look after you, old man!" Niece Lucia smiled, and whispered in deep appreciation to Miss Marion, who nodded, laughing, "He is just a boy," and Mr. Buffum overheard the whisper and was not quite sure whether she wasn't right. He played again the same evening!

UNSEEN.

A SUNBEAM on a dreary day
Pierces my dormer window-pane.
Eyes, a-dazzled, look away,
But are forced to look again
To make sure they really
See that shining company.

Look away! The room is still,
Nothing lives in it but me.
Empty space surrounds me, till—
Looking back—these motes I see
Rising, falling, whirling round
Ceaselessly, without a sound.

Now the sun has gone away,
No more shining motes I see.
Yet I know their endless play
Fills the room, unseen by me.
And it makes me wonder—do
Friends unseen surround me too?

ALICE LOTHIAN.

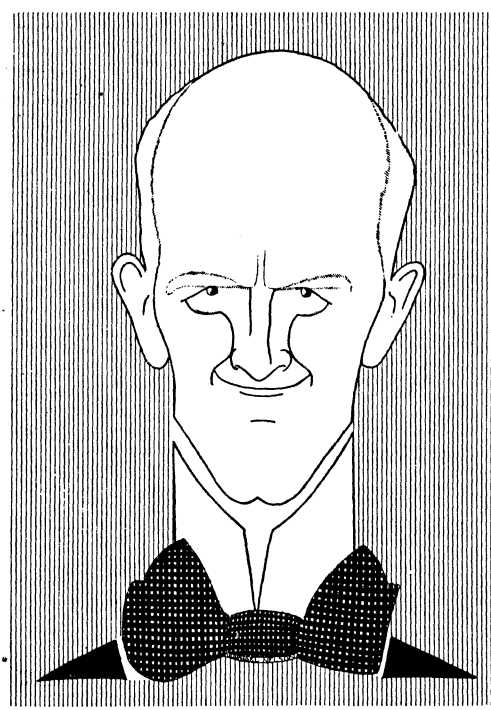
HEADS AND TALES

A LITERARY PORTFOLIO

By ST. JOHN ADCOCK

CARICATURES BY RAPHAEL NELSON

IT is a common complaint just now that far too many books are published. It has been a common complaint ever since Job (or was it Solomon or Jeremiah ?) said that " of the making of books there is no end," and I hope it always will be a common complaint, for the world's population is continually increasing, and it would indicate that the race was degenerating if, while plumbers, lawyers, stockbrokers, tailors, butchers and similar useful members of the community were growing more and more plentiful, poets, novelists, dramatists, philosophers, and others who write books, ceased to increase and multiply in proportion. There is no danger of this, so far, and the various societies formed for the protection and encouragement of authors have no occasion for anxiety. Not that writers of books obtain too much encouragement, either from critics or from a public which, when it has money to spend, usually prefers to spend it on something else, but their profession is so crowded that one shrinks from the thought of what it might become if they received more encouragement than they are getting.



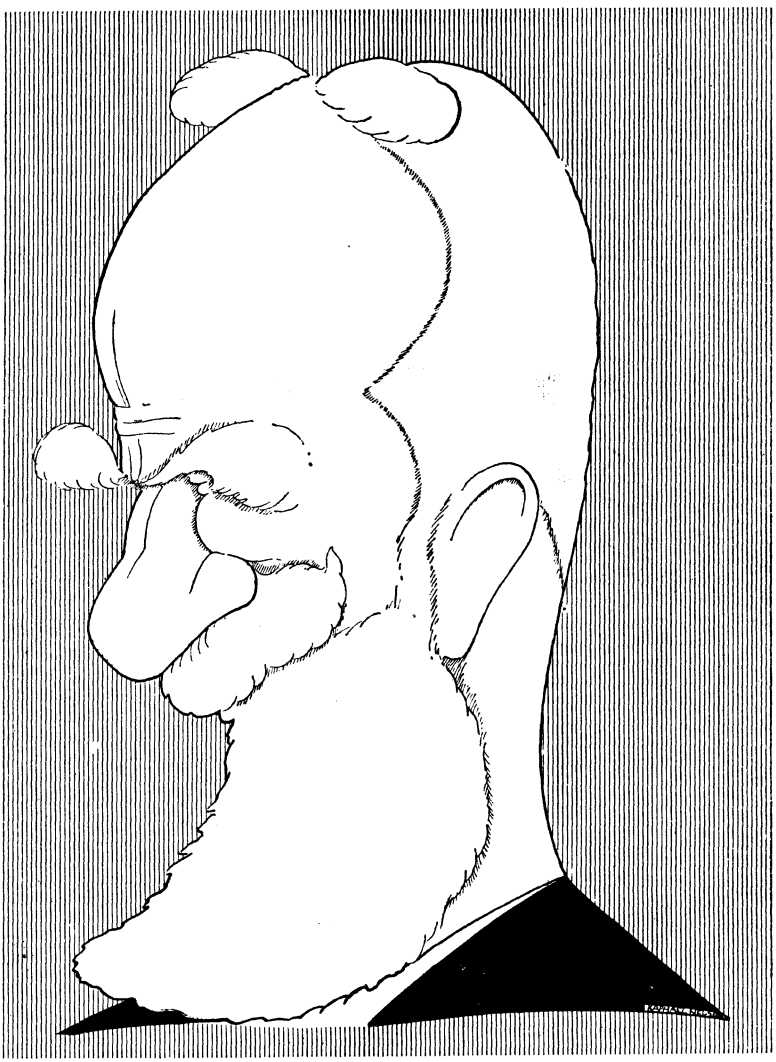
JOHN GALSWORTHY.

Of course, the mass production of books does raise problems : it is impossible for any one of us to read them all, and we don't know where to put them. Even the British Museum is so choked with books that you sometimes have to wait half an hour in the Reading Room while an attendant is journeying for a mile or so round about in subterranean passages to fetch one, and every year fresh thousands pour in and have to be carefully indexed and tucked away there underground ; and most of them never come up any more. A learned professor has proposed to ease the situation by preserving the Bible, Shakespeare, Dante, and three or four more great books, and burning all the rest ; but are Dante and Shakespeare so much in demand that none of the others would be missed ?

Besides, although the enormous quantity of books may worry publishers and booksellers, there is no reason why the reading public should make a grievance of it. They are not bound to read them all, and need not buy any, so long as there are Free Libraries. And critics ought not to complain, though they do ; for the more books

there are the more work there is for them, and the more important they seem in the general scheme of things. The reduction of the output of current literature is not a matter for relighting the fires of martyrdom; it is really in the hands of the critics, or would be if they could only be drilled into acquiring a uniform taste and were all in agreement with each other. As it is, their tastes differ so widely that when one of them half kills a book which he considers better dead, another revives it; and in order to follow the advice they all give him the gentle reader has to be all the time going off in different directions till, at last, he does not know where he is.

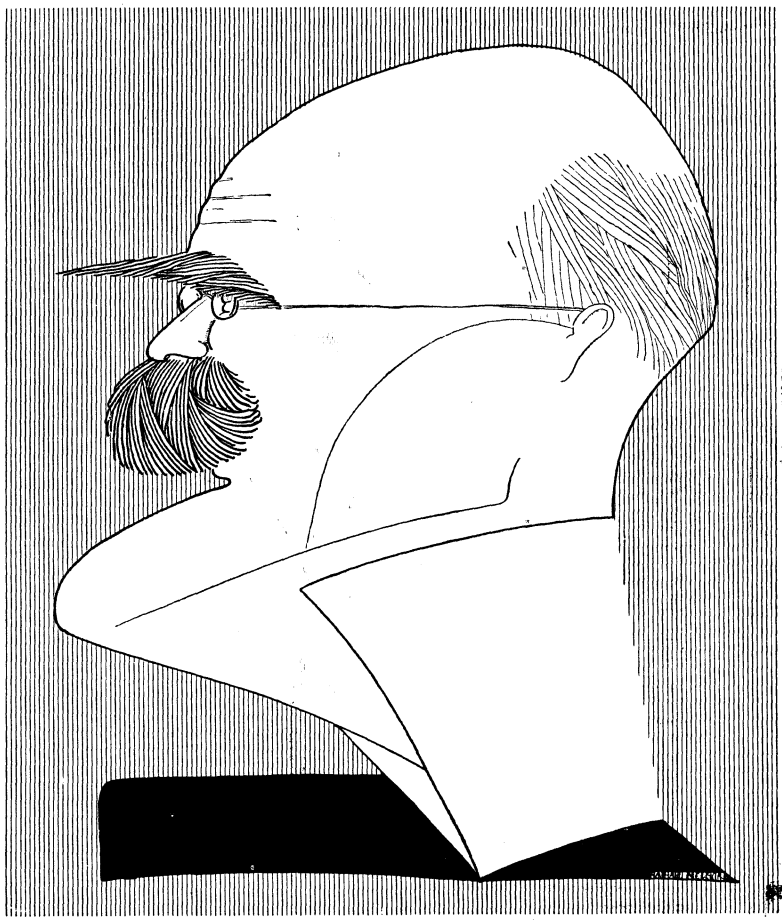
On Monday, say, Gerald Gould will dismiss a new novel by X. Z. with ridicule and such devastating scorn that a reader will feel there is one book it is not necessary for him to waste time or money on, and that after reading Gould's condemnation the author will go home and take a little of something fatal and the output of books will thus be, to some extent, reduced. But on Tuesday, Desmond MacCarthy remarks, elsewhere, that X. Z. has written a quite enjoyable novel and has a nice literary style; on Wednesday, Rose Macaulay re-



GEORGE BERNARD SHAW.

verses this judgment, and tells the world that X. Z. cannot write and his novel is beneath contempt; on Thursday, Arnold Bennett, in his strongest pontifical manner, declares it is the greatest novel of the year and might be compared with the work of the great Russian realists, if they were not incomparable; on Friday, J. B. Priestley upsets everything again and wonders why poor X. Z. does not turn his attention to gardening or stamp-collecting; on Saturday, Robert Lynd says the book is not so bad as some folk think—there is promise in it; and on Sunday, in one paper James Douglas asks, with passion, why such a book was allowed to be published, says he wishes he had taken prussic acid before he read it, and implores the Home Secretary to suppress it at once; while in another paper J. C. Squire maintains a stern silence about it which is significant enough, for it is known that he never reads or writes about any literature which is not of the very highest class. Consequently, when Monday comes round once again, if the gentle reader had not grown accustomed to all this, he would put straws in his hair and be given a certificate and taken away to a safe place and kept under lock and key.

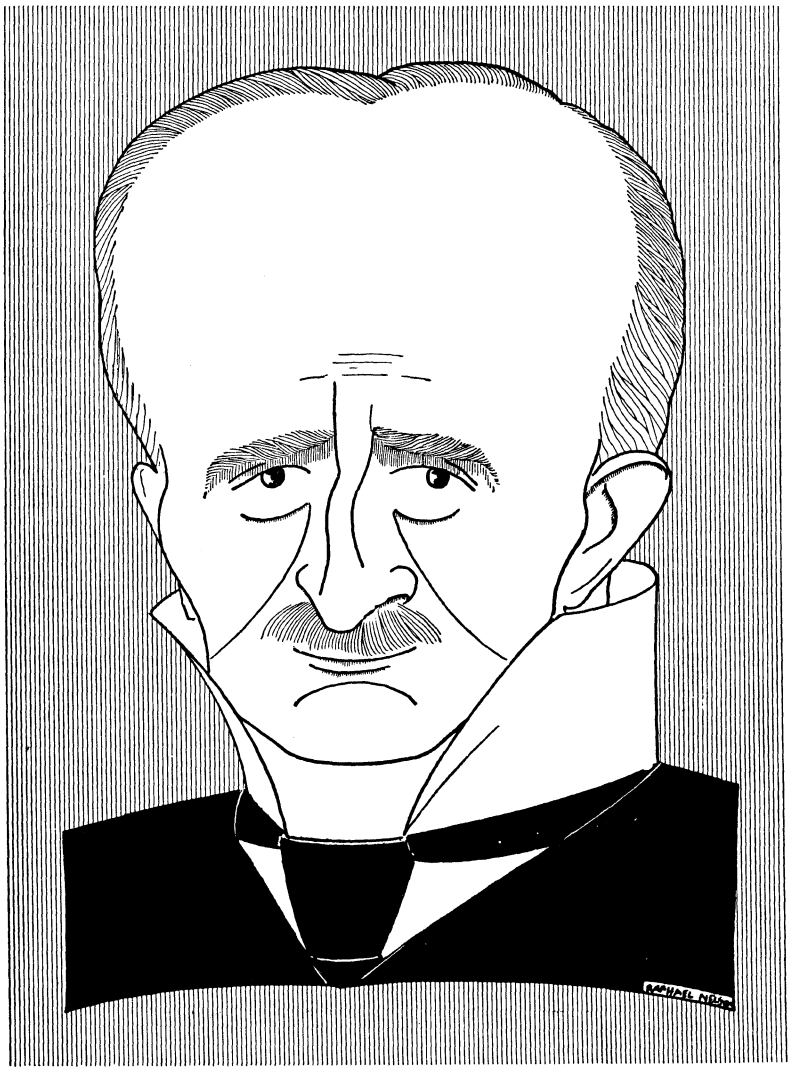
In a literary world where these bewilder-



RUDYARD KIPLING.

ing uncertainties prevail you are not surprised to hear protests that some authors get much too much notice and some get none at all; that books which receive the worst reviews are best sellers; and that many which delight the best critics (though not always written by their best friends) bore people who, not being able to get them for nothing, have to buy them, and prove so far from priceless that within a few weeks

they are selling in second-hand shops as cheaply as if they were second-rate. I do not pretend that the critics are alone to blame: the readers also have their faults. They are too apt to do what they like simply because they like doing it. They read Ethel M. Dell when the critics have told them not to; and they read Edgar Wallace without waiting to find out whether the critics think they should or not. Again, readers and critics are jointly responsible for the fact that it is advisable for authors who wish to be popular, as it was last century for vocalists, that they should conceal their English nationality under a foreign name. Take that recent novel "General Crack," for example: it was deservedly praised and sold well. The author was English, and on his title-page carelessly called himself George Preedy, which was a pseudonym. If only, while he was about it, he had given himself a German name and put his book out as a translation, I am certain it would have been praised even more rapturously and sold at least twice as well. All things considered, with critics contradicting each other and readers buying, or borrowing, a few books of all sorts at random, till this or that one bursts unaccountably into fashion and has to be read in large quantities, how



SIR J. M. BARRIE.

is an author to make himself heard and earn a living and become at length so popular that nobody cares what the critics say of him and every new book he writes will sell as sensationally as if it were a new toilet soap, a new patent medicine, a faster and cheaper type of motor-car, or any other important and attractive novelty ?

The thing can be done, and when he was young G. B. S. set about doing it in the doughtiest and most practical manner. He published one or two clever novels, but they did not get going. He wrote some of the plays which we now tell each other help to rank him with the greatest of dramatists, but they were produced at small theatres, and dramatic critics said they were really not plays at all, because nothing happened in them except long conversations. They fell into the hands of cranks who tried to corner them as too precious to be appreciated by any but the *intelligentsia*, and they might have remained in that corner to this day if Shaw had been the kind of man to be flattered by a persuasion that it was finer to be adored by an audience fit, or even unfit, though few, than to make the popular appeal every writer wants to make and knows he must make if he is to exercise any influence that matters on the life of his own times and on the times that will not otherwise belong to him. He has told us himself that since he could not gain a public by orthodox means he resolved to adopt the methods of the mountebank. " To gain a hearing," he says, " it was necessary for me to attain the footing of a privileged lunatic with the licence of a jester. My method has therefore been to take the utmost trouble to find the right thing to say, and then to say it with the utmost levity. And all the time the real joke is I am in earnest."

The extraordinary point is that, deliberately playing this part of the licensed jester and never seeming to be serious, Shaw has forced the world to take him seriously. It used to call him a clown, a buffoon, a cheap-jack brazenly advertising his own wares ; but it has turned out that his wares were worth advertising and the folly was theirs who were not capable of realizing this until persistent advertisement had brought it home to them. Even his enemies, nowadays, are diffident of trying to put him aside as a zany ; they are uneasily conscious perhaps that they and divers of their social pretensions, stupidities, hypocrisies and obsolete conventions were responsible for most of his laughter, and that while, in their resentment, they saw him as merely a figure of fun, he was really making figures of fun of them. He has never pandered to any public. He has gone his independent way, lived by his own light, and, as careless of offending friends as enemies, unflinchingly told the truth about everything as he saw it. One evidence of his sincerity is that no change of personal circumstance has made any change in the doctrines he has been preaching from the start. From time to time, he has trodden on nearly everybody's toes, and cheerfully accepted the resultant abuse and misrepresentation ; he has even trodden on the toes of his admirers when it seemed needful, and, recovering from their exasperation, they have admired him the more for it. And all the while his plays have been soaring into boundless popularity, even with the people they satirize, and his gospel has by degrees leavened and humanized public opinion more than the majority of us suspect.

He makes things difficult for his ardent disciples by still giving a free rein to his sense of humour and refusing to lapse into dignified and worshipful attitudes. You can scarcely open a newspaper without finding in it a letter from him, an interview with him, a note about something he has been doing or some frivolous but shrewdly significant thing he has said, and more often there are photographs of him there—photographs of him bathing in the sea, sitting in bathing-costume on the shore, walking in the street, laughing with friends, photographs of him as plenty and in as many different moods and attitudes as if he were a society beauty or a film star—no other man living could let himself go so freely and still retain the spiritual and intellectual dignity that are his inherent qualities. His gay insouciance and a sense of what is behind it have worn his stubbornest critics down until they have ceased to accuse him of clowning, and are satisfied to express nothing worse than a virtuous surprise that he should continue to call himself a socialist though he is now a man of considerable wealth ; whereas the real surprise is that though he has amassed wealth he not only calls himself but really remains a socialist—or this would be surprising, only that his consistent aim has been to level up rather than down, to abolish poverty and not wealth.

He rides the whirlwind and directs a storm of controversy such as does not rage round any other successful author of our generation.

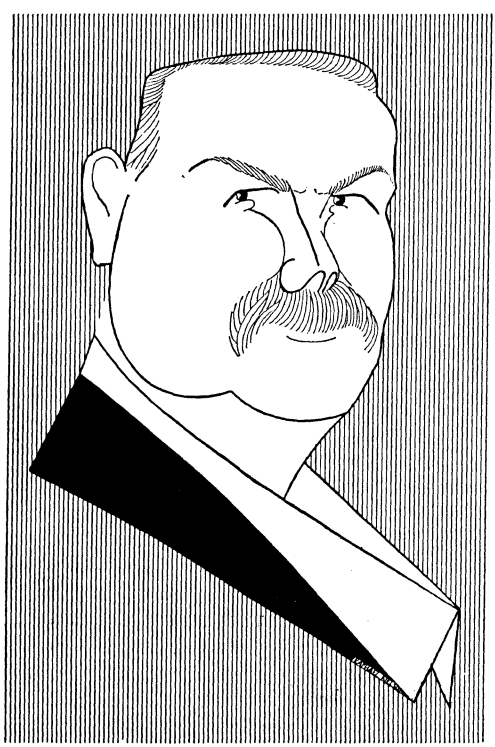
Nor, though many have tried, has any other succeeded by adopting Shaw's way of attempting to compel the world to recognize his genius. But there are other ways, or John Galsworthy might still be waiting in the background, for he is temperamentally incapable of donning the motley and banging a drum to draw the crowd into his booth. He has clothed himself with fame almost as slowly and quietly as a tree puts on its leaves. He is reticent enough to have shunned notoriety rather than have sought it. His first two or three books came out bearing the pseudonym of John Sinjohn. It was after he had shed that disguise, more than twenty years ago, and wrote " The Man of Property " (the first volume in " The Forsyte Saga "), that he began to be recognized as a great social satirist, picturing modern life and character with an uncompromising realistic truthfulness, yet with a sympathy for the weakness, errors, failures in all human sorts and conditions that is wider than the wideness of the sea. He has a curiously level-headed passion for justice, and is as impartial, in his stories, in presenting all sides of a character, the best as fairly as the worst, as a judge is, or should be, in submitting a case to a jury. He has more irony than humour, and is sometimes described as cold and formal, as maintaining too distant an air of detachment toward his imaginary people, of handling them as impassively as a showman handles his puppets or an entomologist his dead beetles. But there are touches in " Strife," " Justice," " The Skin Game," in most of his plays and novels, that are the more poignant because their stark truthfulness is left to make its own effect with no comment on or colouring of the pathos of it. He is as reticent personally of his emotions as in his writings, but gives himself away in his love of animals and birds, no less than in the ready friendliness with which he has often heartened the younger brothers of his



C. K. CHESTERTON.

craft. For all I know, he may even share the Tennysonian sentiment that kind hearts are more than coronets, yet I would hazard a guess that when he declined the knighthood that was once offered him it was not for this reason but because such a purple patch would not be consistent with the austere simplicity of his style.

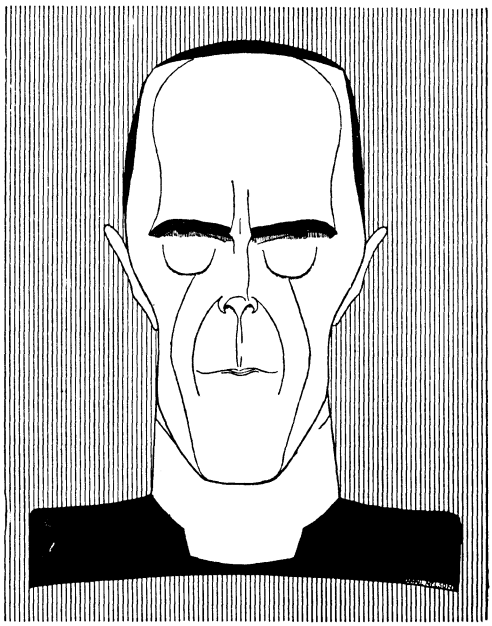
For Kipling there is no such excuse. None of our authors could wear such a title with more justice or with more distinction. His very name was made for one, and seems incomplete without it. Moreover, he is the greatest poet Imperialism ever inspired, and if you take all his Imperialism away from him, what remains leaves him still one of the chief names in our latter-day poetical hierarchy. He is a glorious romancist, yet so potent a realist that when, in the '90's, he was writing his "Departmental Ditties," "Soldiers Three," "Plain Tales from the Hills," "Under the Deodars," his Anglo-Indian poems and sketches were so edged with satire and cynicism and so mercilessly revealing that Barrie said he was "born *blasé*," and Stevenson thought he was bright and shallow, "all smart journalism and cleverness." But he was more than that; there was, at all events, so much genius and power in those youthful experiments that when he left India and, at twenty-five, came to settle in England, they had already made him famous here. He came with the effect of a healthful, vigorous wind blowing through an atmosphere that was languid with a blend of the sentimental sweetness of Tennyson and the sickly, vapoury eroticisms of the decadent bards of the '90's. He shocked the delicate decadents of the period by arriving among them strumming a banjo in place of a standard lyre, drowning their softer voices and sweeping into a rousing popularity, which they resented the more because they had never been able to attain it. But if he startled the echoes of Parnassus with the rollicking airs of the music-hall, he could also set them ringing gloriously with the deep-mouthed music of "M'Andrew's Hymn," the ballads of "The Bolivar" and "Tomlinson," with the stately chaunt of "Recessional," and charm them magically with the grace and poignance of "Sussex" and "The Children's Song." These, and a score of short stories whose names are as familiar as household words, the Jungle Books and the glamorous romance of "Kim," have given him a hold on the public heart and imagination which he has never exerted himself to keep but has never been able to lose. His Imperialism went out of date after the Boer War, and he has not kept abreast of the times; he lives in seclusion and holds his worshippers at arm's length; has no democratic sympathies, and has kicked the under-dog ferociously in verse and prose, and nevertheless has staunch, enthusiastic followers in all classes, and those who hate him as a politician love him heartily as a man of letters who has enriched them with literature that will be alive and glorious long after his politics are as dead and harmless as fossils in a museum.



SIR A. CONAN DOYLE.

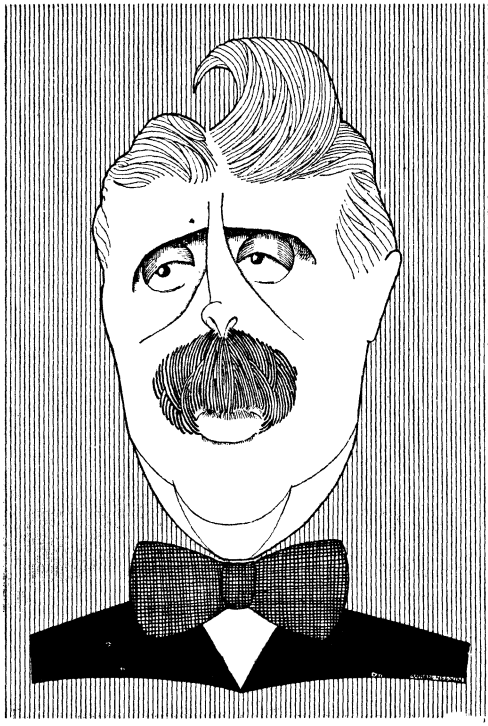
Almost the antithesis of Kipling is Sir James Barrie, whose first little book, "Better Dead," came out in 1887, a year later than the "Departmental Ditties." Barrie has no use for politics, except when he wants to play with the politicians, as he does in "What Every Woman Knows." His long association with fairies, or something else, has given him an uncanny gift of looking through the shows of things, and he is too sagacious to take the politicians or their politics too seriously. He does not go around kicking anybody. He knows all about the seamy side of life, and why the poor are not always contented and cannot

always see their way to keeping quiet in their places and letting the rich and lucky rest comfortable in theirs, but are moved to go into opposition occasionally and do a little fighting for their own benefit. It is no question of politics, but of common humanity, and it is because Barrie sees it in those terms and shows you what entirely unpolitical life means to average men and women that our hard-shell hustlers who have no time to think of anybody but themselves complain that he is sentimental. But though Barrie does not kick, he works more subtly with the other end of his body, and drives home a point with a gentle, whimsical irony that is more efficacious than anything you can do with your foot. You find him in all his changing moods in that memorable rectorial address of his on "Courage," and there he remarks incidentally, "Look at the great ones of the earth, the politicians. We do not discuss what they say, but what they may have meant when they said it." Nothing could be gentler, but it reaches the politician where he lives, punctures him neatly, and leaves him to put a patch on and blow himself out again at his leisure; but the patch remains. It is the inner significance of things that matters to Barrie always, in his fairy plays and fantasies—in "Peter Pan," "Mary Rose," "A Kiss for Cinderella"—no less than in the comedy and pathos of "The Admirable Crichton" and "Dear Brutus." He clothes his thoughts and visions in so much of humour and covert irony, so much of grotesque or dainty fancy, that we do not readily recognize that there is a profounder philosophy, a deeper insight of character, of motive and conduct, in the tales and fantasies he fashions with so light a hand, than in the portentous productions of several of his contemporaries which only seem more realistic because they handle facts as one handles bricks, unimaginatively, and only seem more profound because they are so sombrely and obviously serious. He is as determined a recluse as Kipling, but with essential differences. While Kipling has withdrawn to the unsociable loneliness of Burwash in Sussex, Barrie has exchanged his solitary window in Thrums for a window on Adelphi Terrace, in the populous heart of London. He says he follows a humble branch of literature "which may be described as playing hide and seek with angels," but he does not play the game all by himself in a hermitage. Though he is seldom seen at public functions, you may often come upon him walking, unnoticed, among the surging crowds in the Strand, and nothing will persuade me that those angels of his have not, like Blake's allegorical Mercy, Pity, Peace, and Love, "a human heart—a human face—the human form divine—and a human dress."



DEAN INGE.

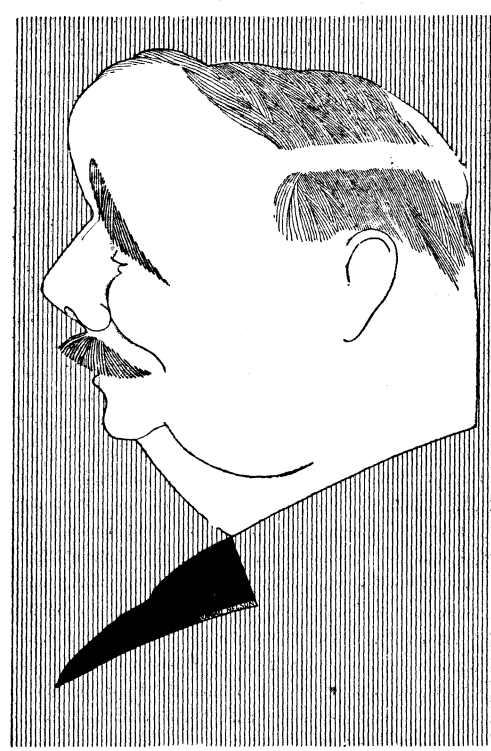
Like Barrie, G. K. Chesterton is a humorist in grain, with a gift of fantasy at times as elusive and delicate, and at times robuster and more riotous, and behind all his fantasy, too—in his essays, poems, novels, even in his detective tales—there are spiritual significances and a wise seriousness that is none the less wise for coming as a jest wearing a halo of laughter instead of as a sermon treating the best of things as if they were not good enough to be entertaining. But, unlike Barrie, he loves politics, though he knows too much of politicians to mix with them and catch their complaints. He has a panacea of his own for curing the world's ills, and would lead us back to a revised and improved version of the social ideals of the Middle Ages. He is so real a romancist that they say he used to go about London in his youth armed with a sword-stick, looking for gallant adventures. So far from being a recluse, he lately confessed that he rejoices to sit in jolly company and sing those lilting, lively community drinking songs which W. R. Titterton writes and has now published, complete with



ARNOLD BENNETT.

music ; and he is frequently to be heard on platforms, lecturing, or in debate with Shaw, Belloc, and other of his peers ; he has figured in pageants disguised as Dr. Johnson ; he has genially fraternized with young authors and contributed prefaces to a multitude of their books, and when Raphael Nelson had his caricatures on show, G. K. C. came to open the Exhibition with a charming speech in which he testified that caricature is the truest portraiture and that it is a mistake to suppose photography is the one art which has taken over a virtue that was peculiar to George Washington. In those brilliant paradoxes of his which used to annoy his critics, he practises the fine art of caricature himself and thus gets at the truth, figuratively and literally. Most authors begin as journalists, and cease to be such as soon as their books are successful ; he began as one, and won't leave off being one, and has a weekly paper of his own in which he can be as heterodox as he pleases. Intellectually, he is a sort of Prospero, Puck and Ariel all in one, and, what is more, I believe he believes in fairies, though I am not sure that he believes he can see them.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, however, who has nothing of Puck or Ariel about him, not only believes in fairies, but can see them—or, anyhow, has seen photographs of them which he is convinced are authentic. For Conan Doyle is an avowed spiritualist, and enrages the sceptical by the calm confidence with which he insists on the reality of occult phenomena, and the unruffled composure with which he accompanies a medium to all sorts of extremes. It enrages them the worse because, whatever else they may doubt, they cannot doubt his absolute sincerity, and cannot deny that in his Sherlock Holmes stories he has shown himself an amazingly acute observer, a master of deductive reasoning, with as keen an appreciation of what is evidence as the most expensive lawyer who ever cross-examined a nervous witness and scared him into saying what he did not mean. Strangely perverse, while he does so much the practical man cannot understand, he also does all those things that are done by the practical man himself. He is a sportsman, expert at cricket and golf, he has climbed mountains, been whaling, was a huntsman and is a capital shot. He was a medical man until Sherlock made him so prosperous that, taking Shakespeare's advice, he threw physic to the dogs and dropped his M.D. to become



H. G. WELLS.

a man of larger letters. He has created almost the only character in modern fiction that everybody knows by name and speaks and thinks of as if he were a living human creature. All the same, when time has put things into due perspective, it will not be astonishing if Conan Doyle emerges into fame for those notable historical romances, "Sir Nigel," "Micah Clarke," and "The White Company," with Sherlock Holmes playing second-fiddle in the background as an ingenious invention by the same author.

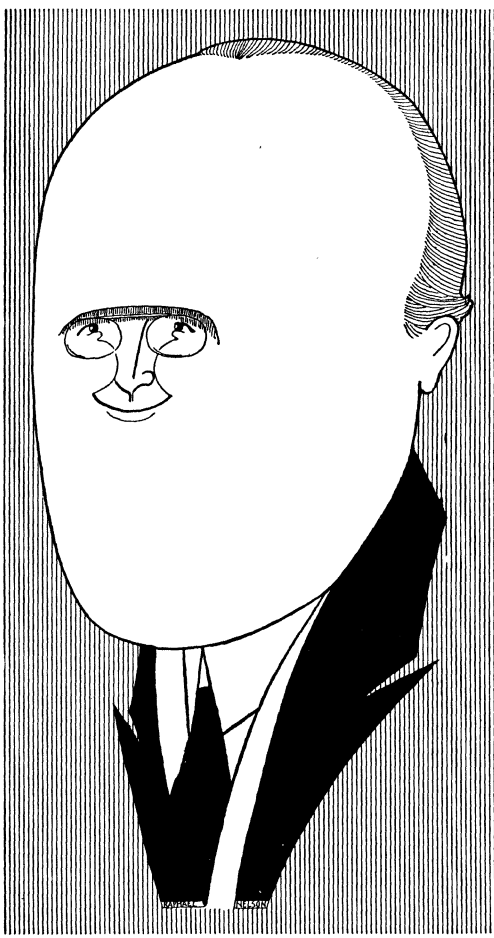
Without having more than the average man's knowledge of science, I know enough of it to be able to appreciate the great scientific genius of Sir Oliver Lodge, and for this I am mainly indebted to the fact that he is a literary artist as well as a brilliant physicist and has, what few scientists possess, a subtle skill in simple and lucid exposition and a charm of style that has enabled him to popularize what are not universally regarded as popular subjects. He, too, ranks as a spiritualist, but I think it would be more accurate to describe him as a student engaged in psychic research—a sincere, independent inquirer, who has had the courage to face ridicule and contumely in the cause of learning, and to proclaim his discoveries and his faith in their validity with no uncertain voice. I recollect when he began experimenting in that direction and thus recorded his conviction of the possibility of communicating with the spirit-world, the wiseacres who believe in nothing they cannot see and cut into with a knife shook their heads and said his career as a scientist was ruined. He ignored these prognostications, and has gone his way, not closing his eyes or his mind against any chance of broadening the horizon of human knowledge, but boldly adventuring on the search for new light wherever it might be found, and instead of falling in ruins his scientific reputation has not only, like Dick Swiveller's wing of friendship, never moulted a feather, but has acquired a more magnificent plumage than ever. After all, the proverb about the man who laughs last still holds good, and the pioneer of wireless telegraphy may prove in the long run to be also a pioneer on the track of even less material wonders.

But who shall decide when scientists disagree? H. G. Wells is another, and chemistry and biology have made him a materialist, in spite of the fact that, as one of the most imaginative of writers, you would think it easier for him to imagine ghosts than to doubt their existence. You cannot help thinking this of the author of "The Time Machine," "The Wonderful Visit," of that grim fantasy "The Island of Doctor Moreau," of such daring flights as "The First Men in the Moon," even if he grows more strictly mundane in "Tono Bungay," "Mr. Polly," "Kipps," and those realistic, argumentative tales of ordinary life, "The World of William Clissold" and "Meanwhile." But a man of his many-sided genius and eager, inquiring spirit is not to be pigeon-holed under any one label. The dreamer, the visionary, the seer in him who



SIR OLIVER LODGE.

has glimpses of more things than the scientist can tabulate, gets the upper hand of the materialist at intervals in most of his books, except those that formulate his economic theories and Utopian nightmares. Wells, again, is a politician; he even put up for Parliament, and I lost all respect for the particular (or not too particular) constituency that missed the opportunity of electing such a representative. But I am glad he did not get in. His broad, sane, far-seeing political views have an immeasurably wider vogue in the Press than they could get from the floor of the House, and in the papers he cannot be shouted down, he may speak without interruption and as often as he will, for there he can always catch the ear of the world without having first to catch the Speaker's eye.



HUGH WALPOLE.

In the same fashion, by taking to journalism, Dean Inge has added a new wing to his pulpit and soars out to thousands who would not otherwise be within his reach. I don't know why he was named "the gloomy Dean." Certainly, his outlook is not invariably cheerful. When he waxes prophetic he does not seem to see much that is worth looking at in the future, but prophets never do—nobody would be sufficiently alarmed to respect them if they did. When he casts his eye over the world of to-day he is not altogether happy about the look of that either. There is too much in it that he does not like. He does not like Democracy, for instance; he has got it and does not know what to do with it, and can't take it back anywhere and change it; which is enough to make anybody low-spirited. But when he turns to subjects that appeal to him, he is one of the wisest, wittiest, most shrewdly commonsensible of essayists, and his lay sermons in the evening paper that prints them are more useful and more entertaining than most sermons that are laid in a pulpit, and we take them not as one of the duties but as one of the joys of the week.

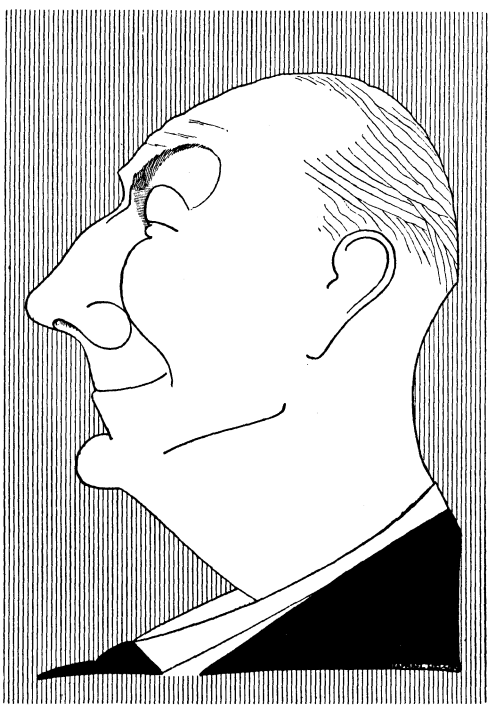
Possibly through starting in a solicitor's office, Arnold Bennett is severely practical and has developed a rather dogmatic judicial faculty. If you have read his early books, "The Author's Craft," "How to Become an Author," and so on, you will know he began by knocking all the romantic stuffing out of the idea of authorship, and put it on a proper business footing. If you want to be an author, draper, engineer, anything, you have only to go the right way to work and you can be one. He decided to be a successful novelist, and became one; to be a painter, and proceeded to paint uncommonly well; to be a successful dramatist, and he is one; to be eminent in criticism, and for years he has shown himself to be one of the soundest of literary judges; and latterly, since he has been doing it weekly for the evening paper in which Dean Inge discourses, he has risen to be a kind of Pope among critics, so that if he says a book must sell, it does; if he says it is a good book or a bad book, it is good or bad accordingly—or if it isn't it ought to be ashamed of itself. There is no narrow-mindedness about his critical views. He can appreciate realistic truth and literary quality in fiction, for, in "The Old Wives' Tales," "Clayhanger," "Riceyman Steps," and others, he has written such novels himself; the humorist who could produce "The Card" and "Mr. Prohack" is able to perceive and acclaim the humour of his con-

temporaries wherever he finds it; and he does not despise the yarn of mystery and sensation, for he has himself done one of the best of these in "The Grand Babylon Hotel." Novelist, painter, essayist, dramatist, critic, whatever he has put his hand to he has done brilliantly. I live in hope that he will one day resolve to be a poet, for we could do with another, and if he made up his mind to be one, he would.

Hugh Walpole is not so versatile. He is an excellent critic, and has indulged in a few essays, as a violinist in his spare time might do a little singing: but, in the main, he is a born novelist and one of the ablest and most popular of our generation. He is only a little over forty, yet a few years ago his works appeared in a collected edition, as if he had already been comfortably put to bed among the classics. But he has gone on and produced some of his best books since then. He has done for our century what Trollope did for his, as a chronicler of the character and manners of middle and high society, with side-glances on clerical life that might have been expected from the son of a bishop.

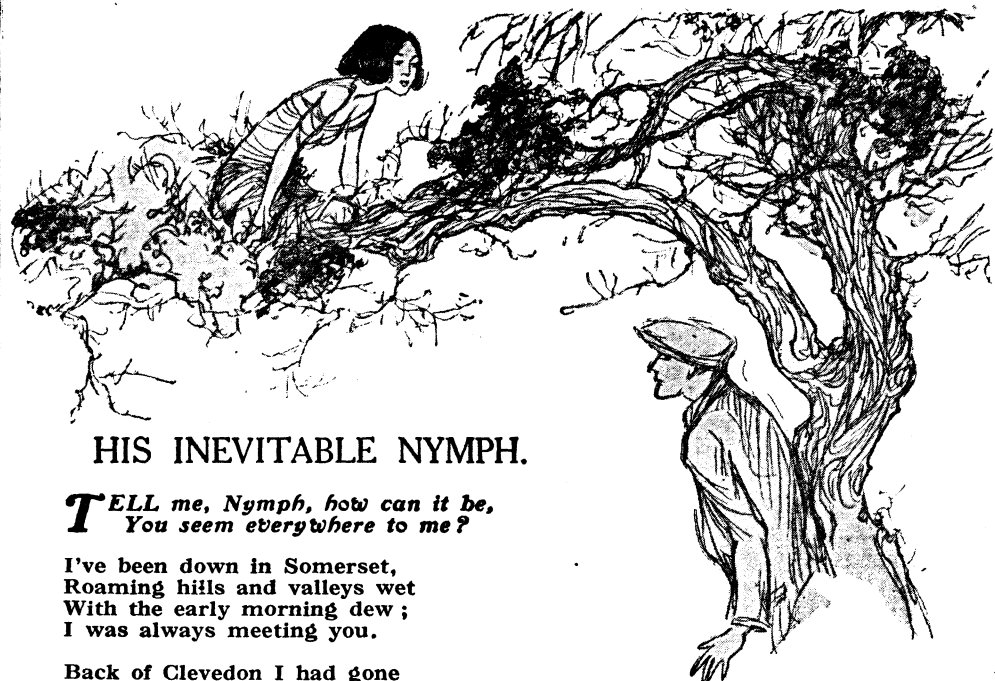
Popular as he is, however, his popularity is a wart to a carbuncle compared with that of Edgar Wallace. Back in the last century, having served for six years as a private soldier, then as a war-correspondent in the Boer War, Wallace made a preliminary stir with a volume of soldier songs rather in the Kipling vein. Then he wrote "Smithy" and "The Four Just Men," and began to make a noise, but the noise has only swollen to an unprecedented roar in the last half decade. He fills the theatres with three or four plays at a time; if a new novel of his is not published within a few weeks of the last people begin to ask if he is ill; and all the while he is running race-horses, writing prophetic and other articles on racing in the newspapers, and keeping his torrent of books in full spate, as if he were a super-man with three heads and a corresponding number of arms working continually on a mammoth typewriter with a triple keyboard. Everybody reads his stories and rejoices openly in them; except the very high-brow critics, and it is understood that they do it too, but not openly. Openly, they write of him with a certain condescension, just as Victorian high-brows used to write about Dickens. The *Spectator* in its Centenary Number penitently admitted that its own critics, like many others, regarded Dickens as a popular but ordinary and ephemeral author, and that is what ours say of Wallace. I don't suggest that he is another Dickens, and he would laugh at me if I did; but, by their attitude toward him, that seems to be what our high-brows think he is, and who are we to contradict them? If the chief end of literature is to give pleasure—and to read some of the books published now you would never guess that it was—a vaster number of readers have found their way to that end through Edgar Wallace than through any other novelist of to-day, and he is still keeping his own end up as if it were endless.

In his "Courage" address, Barrie says a "sure way to fame is to know what you



EDGAR WALLACE.

mean." The twelve authors in my group all know what they mean; they knew at the outset what they meant to do, and they did it, with inevitable results. There are plenty more who have done likewise—Phillpotts, Maxwell, Swinnerton, Oppenheim, Hutchinson, Noyes, Masefield, May Sinclair, Sheila Kaye-Smith, Rebecca West—a host of them; but as Raphael Nelson has only drawn twelve samples I have limited myself to these. Why he included no women I do not know; unless, since he heard Chesterton say caricature is the truest portraiture, his native chivalry would not let him.



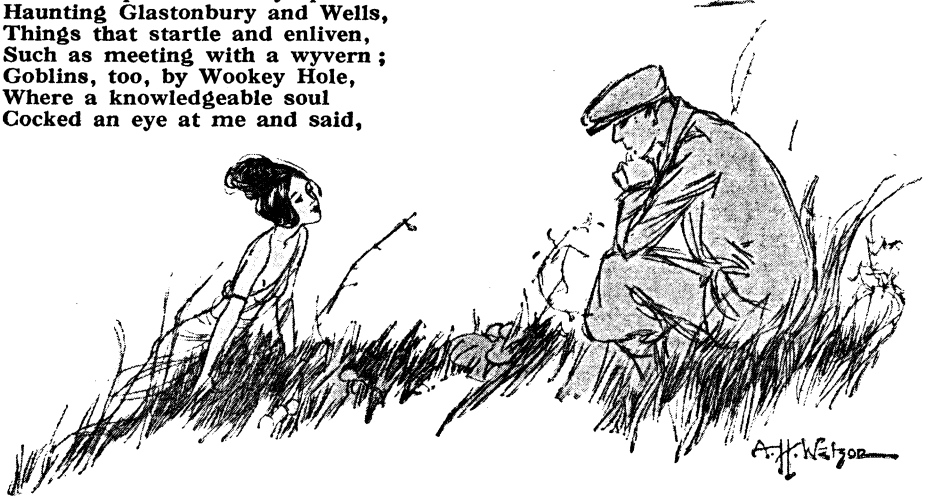
HIS INEVITABLE NYMPH.

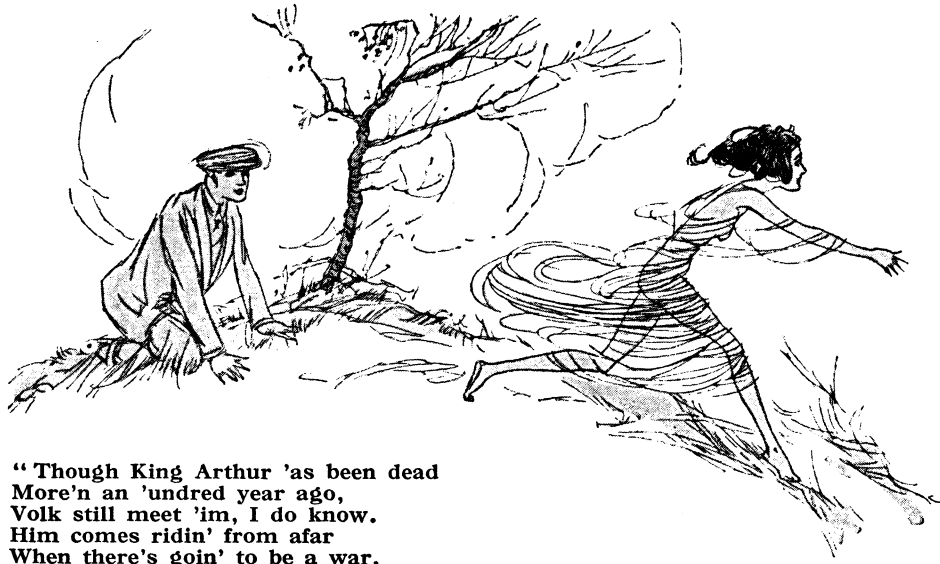
TELL me, Nymph, how can it be,
You seem everywhere to me?

I've been down in Somerset,
Roaming hills and valleys wet
With the early morning dew;
I was always meeting you.

Back of Clevedon I had gone
Up a hill and sat alone
On a pleasant grassy mound,
Just to dream and gaze around:
Cows at pasture, and beyond,
Ducks were paddling on a pond.
All was sleepy and serene
In this uneventful scene,
Till the moon began to rise:
Out you popped before my eyes!
"Hello, Nymph!" I said,—and then,
You were up and off again.

There's a power of fairy spells
Haunting Glastonbury and Wells,
Things that startle and enliven,
Such as meeting with a wyvern;
Goblins, too, by Wookey Hole,
Where a knowledgeable soul
Cocked an eye at me and said,



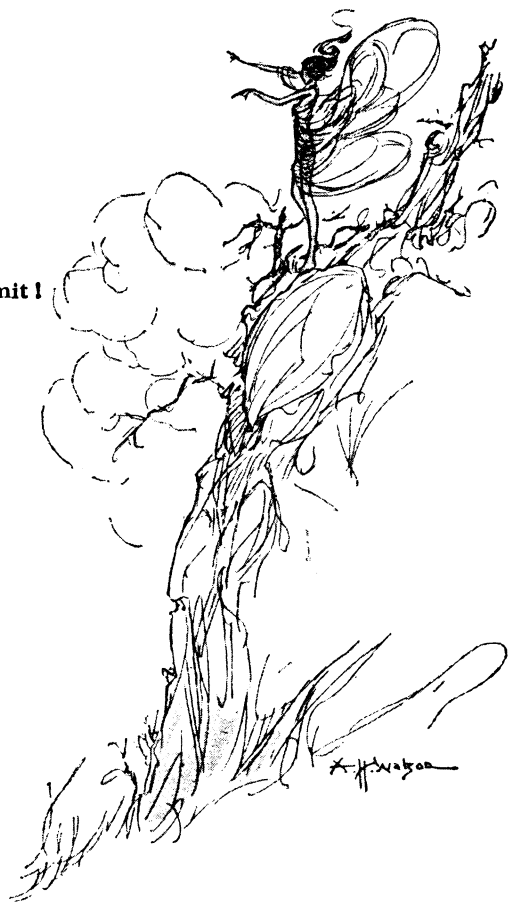


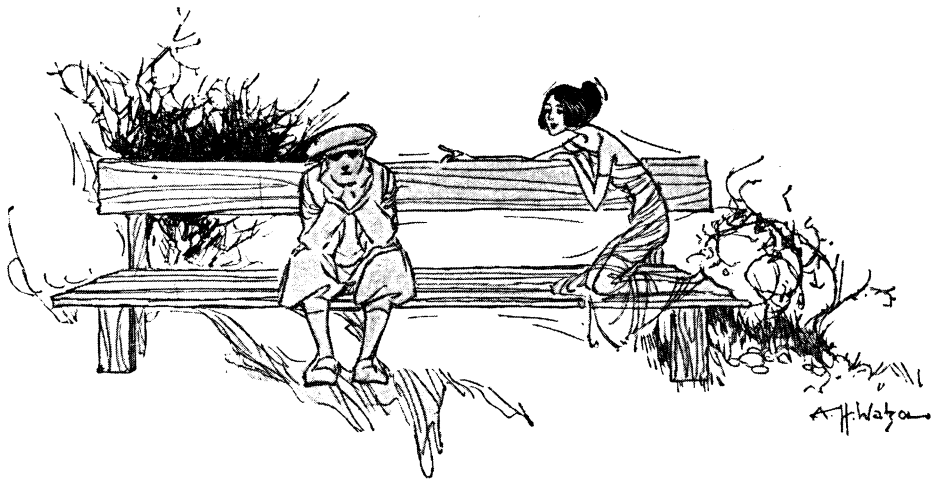
"Though King Arthur 'as been dead
More'n an 'undred year ago,
Volk still meet 'im, I do know.
Him comes ridin' from afar
When there's goin' to be a war,
Ridin' through the fens by night
To see as everything be right;
Proves 'im never can forget
Us old volk in Zumerzet."

All of this may well be true,
But I only met with—*You!*

Visiting the Caves of Cheddar,
I grew pale, and then grew redder,
Pale and really stark and stiff
When I saw you on the cliff,
Standing on the very summit.
"Look out, Nymph!" I cried,—O lummit!
In the deepest cave you came
Through the darkness like a flame.
"There she goes!" I blurted out;
Crowds of strangers wheeled about,
And the cavern fairly blazed
With my blushes, while they gazed,
Pitying me.—I hastened on
To the town of Lullington,
Expecting, from its name, to find
Ease of heart and peace of mind.
So I might, had it not been
There ensued a painful scene







When in the square I said, "Now that,—
That's my Nymph!" and raised my hat:
Half the natives yelled, "Poor fellow!"
And followed, mocking me, to Wellow.

Though I lost 'em,—O, beshrew it!
Another scene at Hinton Blewett.

I mopped my brow upon a bench,
And fainted, sighing, "Blow the wench!"

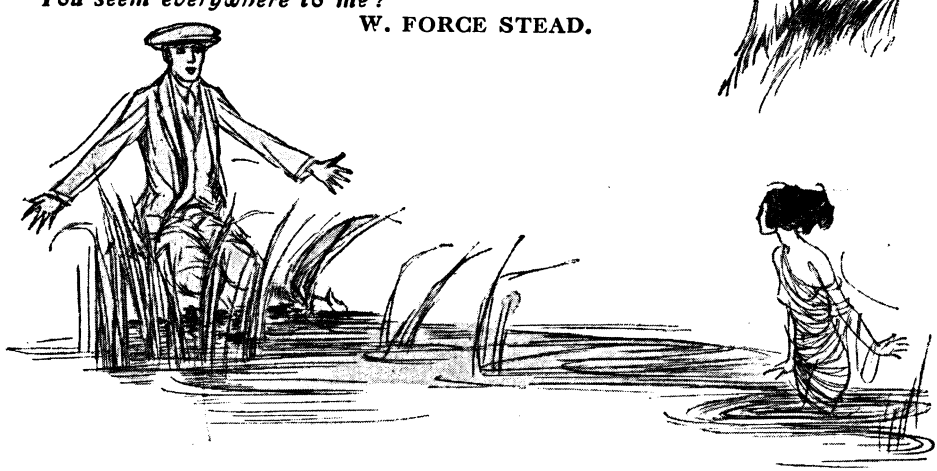
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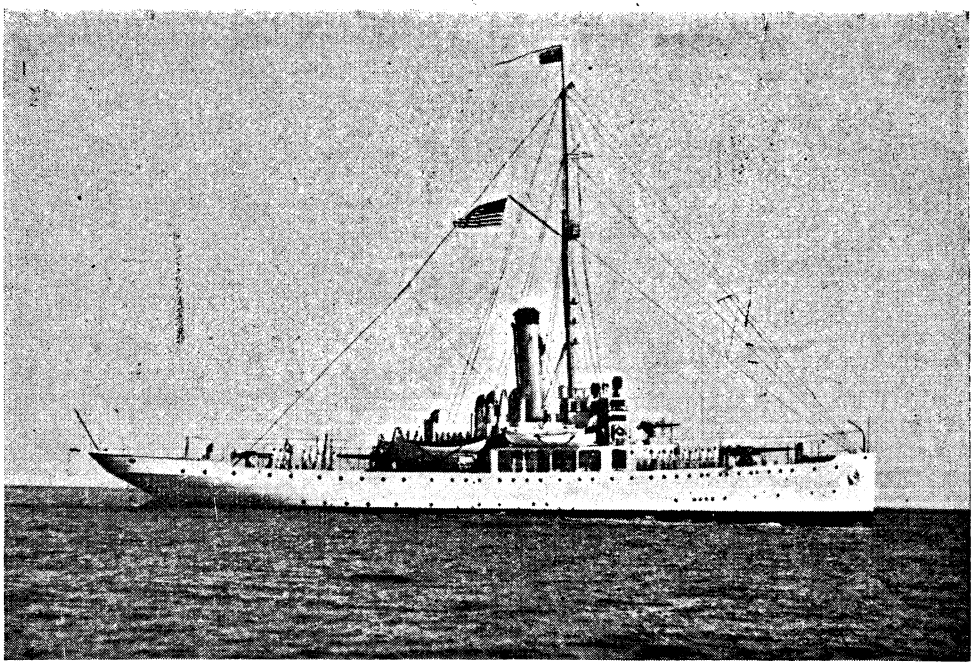
Wandering Gipsy Nymph, I'm now
Back in Oxford, and I vow
I have met you, my Adored,
Up the High and down the Broad;
In the Union, where, you know,
Nymphs are not supposed to go:
Strolling here beside the Cher,—
Down I gaze, and—*there* you are!

Tell me, Nymph, how can it be,
You seem everywhere to me?

W. FORCE STEAD.







AN ICE-PATROL CUTTER.

These vessels search for icebergs throughout the spring and summer months and wireless the position of the bergs to steamers likely to encounter them.

THE ATLANTIC ICE PATROL

By HAROLD J. SHEPSTONE

Photographs by Holloway Bros., St. John's, Newfoundland, and the United States Coast Guard Service

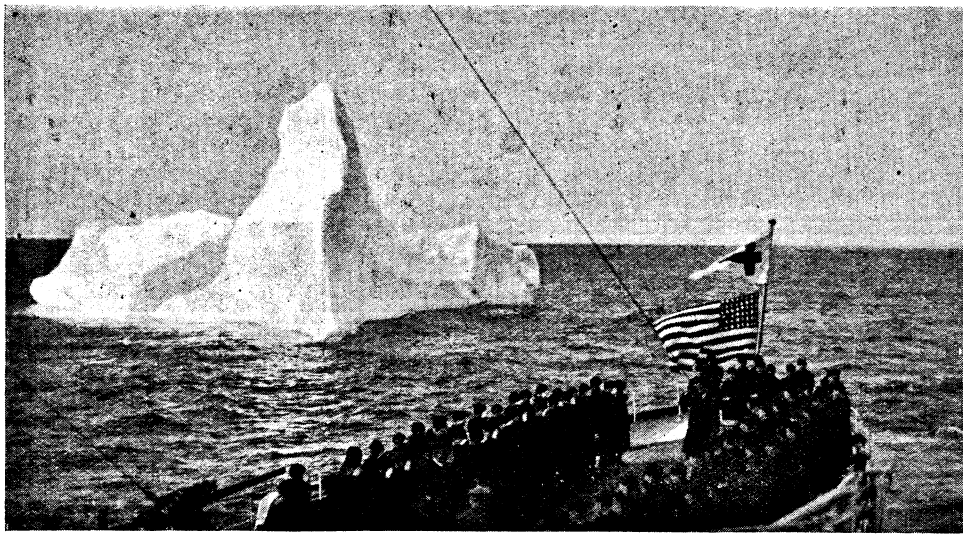
"WHERE is the ice?"

The question is asked by every vessel crossing the Atlantic the moment she enters the iceberg zone to the south of Newfoundland. According to the answer wirelessed from one of the ice patrol ships she either keeps to her course or proceeds a little to the north or south of it.

Observation has shown that for something like 40 per cent. of the time in winter and for fully half of the time in summer the waters of the Grand Banks are enveloped in a mantle of fog. It is these dense fogs that make it so difficult for vessels to locate the presence of the many icebergs which come floating down from the glaciers of Greenland, borne by the Labrador Current. The bergs make their appearance in the spring and continue to be a menace to shipping until well into the summer months.

The object of the Ice Patrol Boats, a unique service which was inaugurated as a result of the sinking of the *Titanic*, with a loss of about 1,500 souls, through striking an iceberg, is to seek out the ice and notify its whereabouts to all ships on the Trans-Atlantic route.

"Searching for icebergs is often exciting work," said Lieut. F. A. Zeusler, of the United States Coast Guard Service, to the writer recently in Washington. Lieut. Zeusler was in command of the service a season



A " TITANIC " MEMORIAL SERVICE.

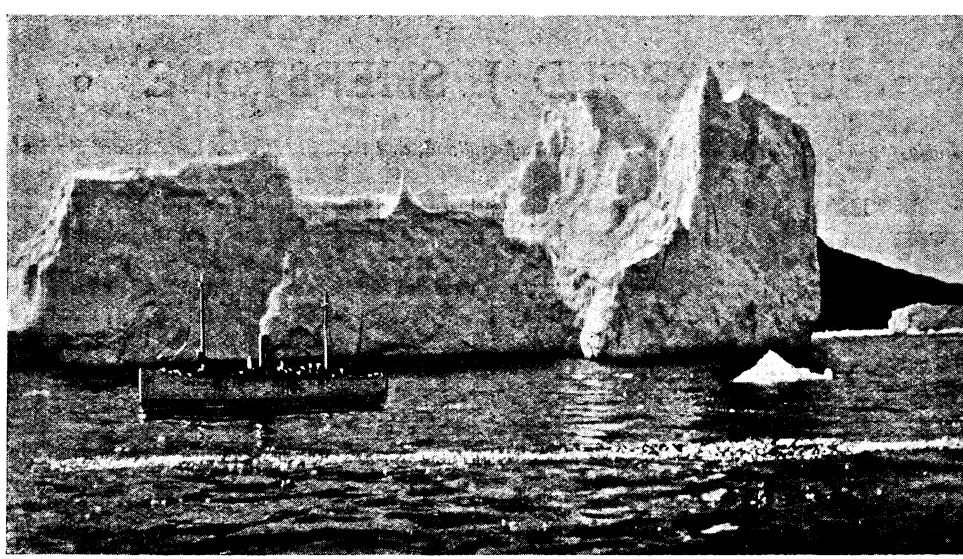
On April 14 a memorial service is held on board the ice patrol for the 1,513 souls who lost their lives when the *Titanic* collided with an iceberg in 1912.

or two ago and spent the whole of the time on the Grand Banks, carrying out some novel experiments in an attempt to find a way of ridding the ocean of these floating dangers.

" When we sight an iceberg," he said, " we approach close enough to take photographs and sketches from two sides. We also take observations to determine its dimensions—length, breadth, and height above water. From these figures we can gauge roughly the total mass, for always only one-eighth of an iceberg is exposed. Next we take temperatures at the surface and at five different depths, and get samples of water for salinity determination.

" These data enable us to predict in what direction the berg will move. We calculate also the rate of drift and the direction of movement, and the information is then transmitted in a special Ice Broadcast by our wireless operator.

" Two experiments carried out last season



UNITED STATES COAST-GUARD BOAT STEAMING PAST AN ICEBERG.

were of unusual interest. We attempted to apply the sonic depth-finder to the problem of locating icebergs, and while our tests produced only fair results, they paved the way for detection experiments with radio waves in place of sound waves, which will be undertaken when the apparatus has been completed.

"Our second object was to destroy icebergs by means of high explosives. The theory that these spectres of the North Atlantic steamer lane could be blown to pieces has long been held by some men of science and of the sea.

"Our first subject was a berg showing ten feet above water, with a length of fifty feet; an 'old' berg, honeycombed by weathering. A commissioned officer and a boat's crew of eight planted 210 pounds of T.N.T. under a ledge of the berg: they then pulled away to a safe distance, reeling off the electric control cable as they went.

"When the officer closed the switch a tremendous explosion shook the air and the water. One end of the berg fell off and the sea all about was cov[illegible]with small ice. We estimated that we c[illegible]ust two days off the life of this berg.

"It was a different story when we tried T.N.T. on a bigger block of sound ice. This second spectre was 300 feet long and about 150 feet high. From one side projected one of the long, dangerous ice tongues, covered with about ten feet of water. We laid the mines on the shelf and set them off.

"The berg shivered, a shower of loose ice

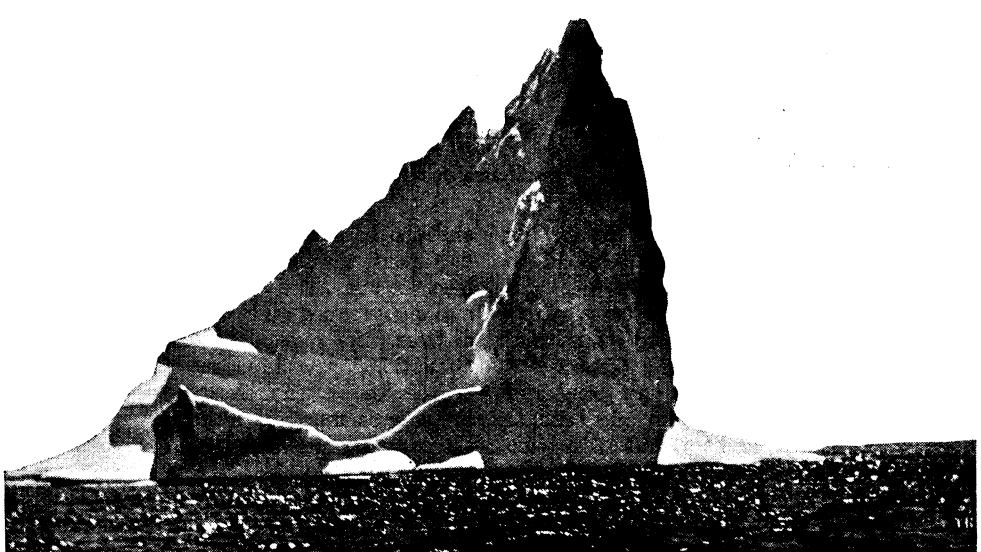


OFFICER OF PATROL BOAT IN CROW'S NEST LOOKING OUT FOR ICEBERGS.

tumbled off the upper ledges, a geyser of water and black powder smoke went up a hundred feet and came down, and the calm of nature settled again upon the sea and the ice. But there was no serious damage to the berg.

"Next we shot a line across the projecting end of the berg. On one end we attached the mine, lowering it to 75 feet below the surface and balancing the weight with a bag of iron on the other end of the rope. The explosion shook the berg more, but there was no perceptible damage. That charge would have given a mortal blow to the strongest ship afloat!

"Our third attempt to mine and destroy an iceberg was made upon the largest that



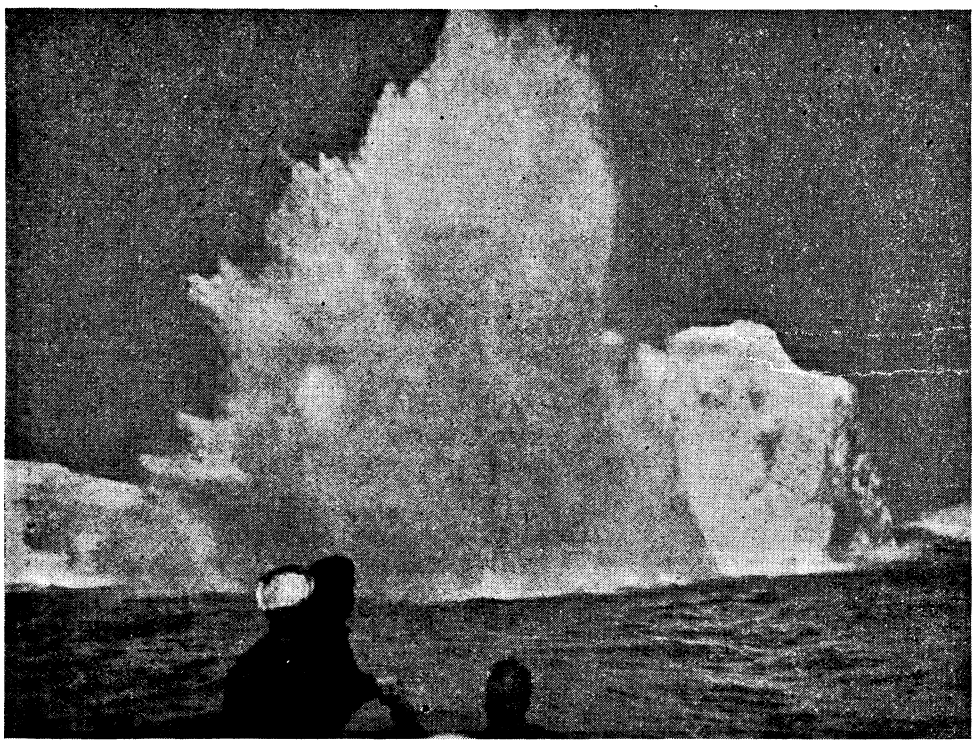
AN ICEBERG WITH A REMARKABLE RESEMBLANCE TO A YACHT IN FULL SAIL.

came into the steamer lanes last season, a strapping giant of a million and a half tons. We first sighted her on the edge of the Banks on May 26, and christened her No. 14. All bergs that are potentially dangerous are numbered. She was hugging the Banks and sailing merrily southward at the modest rate of twenty-one miles a day. We kept her under almost continuous observation until she disappeared some thirty-five days later.

"The berg was 512 feet long and towered 267 feet above the water-line. One of the boys on board was all for towing the floating mass to Boston or New York and selling it to some ice-making concern. There was sufficient ice in this single berg to supply New York's summer demand for two and a half months!

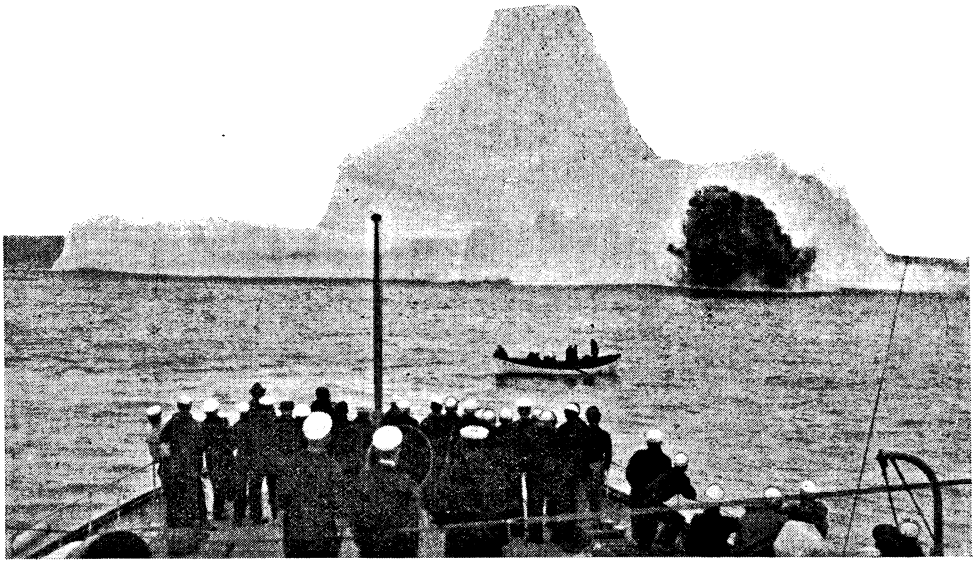
"We first exploded mines on a tongue of the berg, and then under water, as we had done with the second berg, but with even less effect. Then we decided to try to dig a hole with four charges placed on a smooth, water-polished shelf 40 feet wide terminating in a cliff 200 feet high. As the shelf had rounded edges, landing on the berg proved no easy feat. Without spiked boots it would have been impossible. When the men had secured a footing, steps had to be cut in the ice. The four explosions enabled us to sink the last charge in a hole 15 feet deep and 20 feet across. Ice was stamped in over the charge, but the explosion only served to paint a black smudge a hundred feet wide the whole height of the ice cliff. This black banner served as a handy identification mark.

"Two days later we struck heavy seas and the berg was subjected to much bombardment, the spray dashing a hundred feet into the air. The berg shook tremendously and she groaned and rocked like a vessel in distress. As a result of the gale she lost about 20,000 tons of ice from the higher cliff, the disintegration helped no doubt by our blasting as much as by the waves. When the weather permitted, we again boarded the berg and exploded more mines, and so by the help of explosives and gales she gradually diminished until she disappeared altogether. We even tried our six-pounder projectiles on No. 14, but when fired at even



BLOWING UP AN ICEBERG BY MEANS OF T.N.T. MINES.

This slightly shortens the life of the berg and causes it to melt more rapidly in the Gulf Stream.



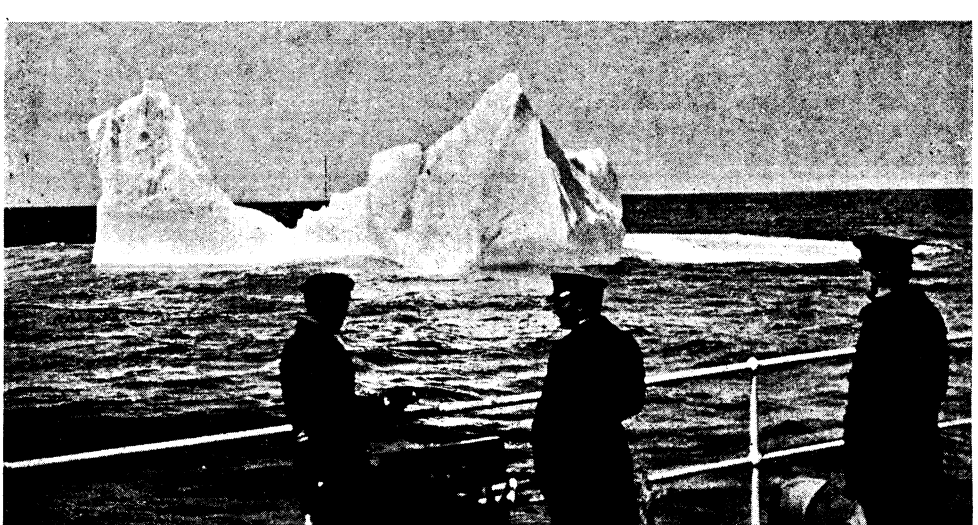
ICE PATROL CUTTER STANDING BY TO OBSERVE THE EFFECT OF A MINE EXPLOSION ON A BERG.

The damage was negligible. A column of water, a dark smudge, a fall of loose ice, and a slight tremor seemed to be the only results.

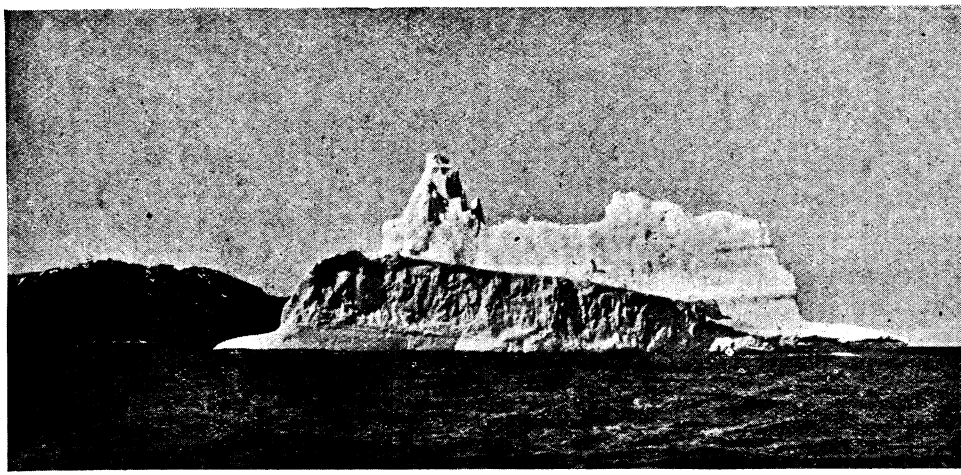
so close a range as 150 yards they penetrated only a few feet and apparently had no effect whatever.

" Occasionally we land on the bergs to obtain ice for our refrigerators. Ice from icebergs is pure and fresh. As the boat approaches the floating island of ice a sizzling sound becomes audible. Close attention shows that this comes from small pieces of ice slipping into the sea. Unlike ordinary ice lumps, the pieces effervesce. This is a peculiarity of glacial ice, due, in all probability, to the fact that it is compacted of snow.

" One day we had the unique experience of sailing into a field of ice where fourteen large bergs were in sight at one time. There are two easily recognisable types of icebergs —the ' solid ' and the ' dry-dock.' The distinction is important, for the two types have



NO. 14 ICEBERG AFTER SEVERAL MINE EXPLOSIONS AND HEAVY BUFFETING IN ROUGH SEAS.

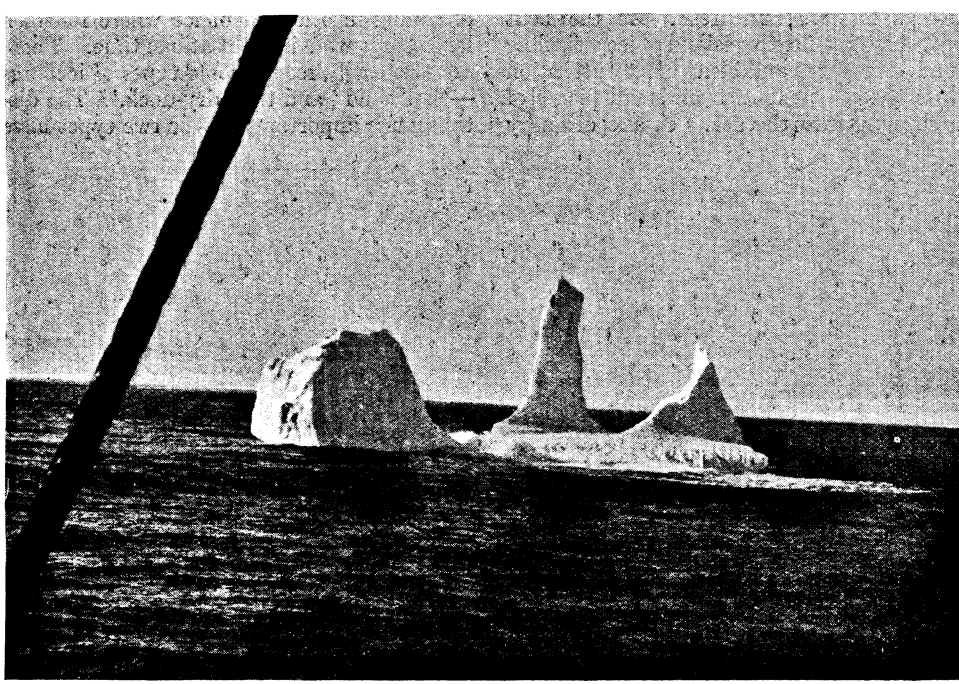


ICEBERG OFF CAPE RACE, NEWFOUNDLAND.

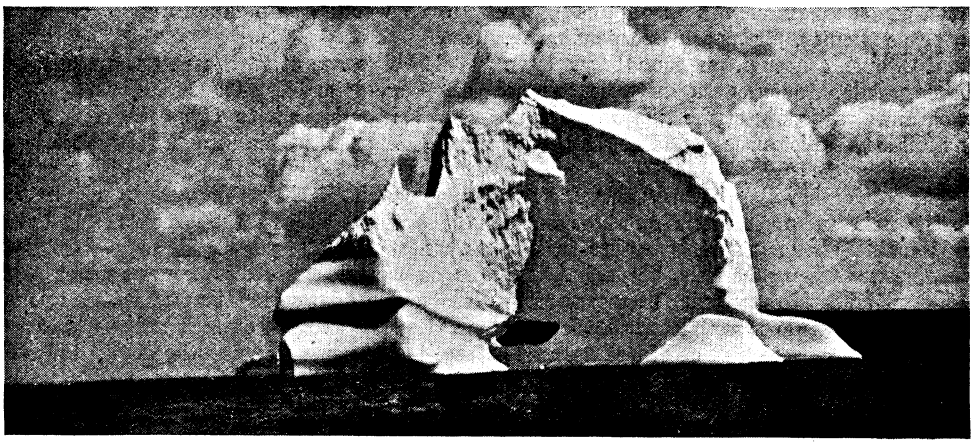
different histories. The 'solid' has often the massive symmetry of a great block of white marble. It usually lies comparatively low in the water. Its sides are rounded by the action of the water, because it has tipped now this way, now that. The 'dry-dock' type, as the name implies, consist of two high sides with a low passage between. These gave us the most trouble last year, probably because they are such sturdy sailing craft that the sea cannot attack them so easily as it can their rolling brothers.

"Contrary to general belief, icebergs do not frequently turn completely over. They will tip ninety degrees one day, then perhaps next day swing eighty degrees in another direction, but they seldom turn turtle.

"We learn much about the habits of icebergs. One we came upon had a regular oscillating movement. It tipped over to



NOT A LIGHTHOUSE, BUT A DISAPPEARING BERG OF THE "DRY-DOCK" TYPE.

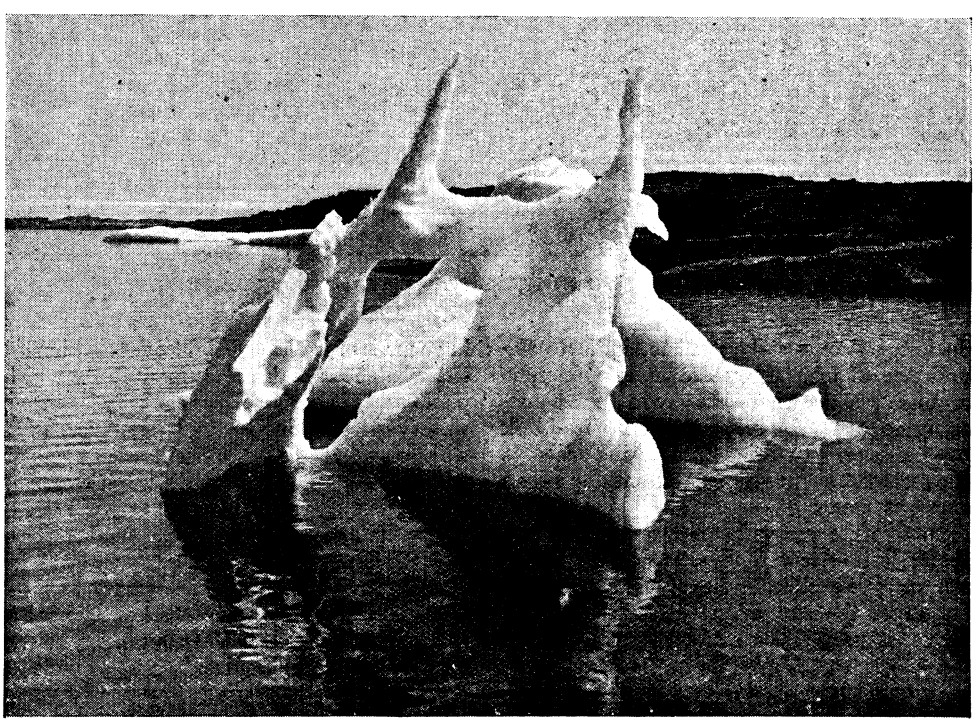


ICEBERGS ASSUME ALL KINDS OF SHAPES, RESEMBLING CASTLES AND PINNACLES.

one side during a period of eight minutes, and then tipped back again. This continued for seven hours. Then, with a tremendous crash, it fell over on its side, exposing its erstwhile keel.

" The ' solid ' bergs assume shapes of sleeping dogs or lions, of King Tutankhamen in his tomb, and perfect profiles. The ' dry-dock ' bergs, on the other hand, give us towered castles and lofty pinnacles."

It is a tradition among mariners that an iceberg will give off an echo, but this is not the experience of the officers of the patrol. During a recent spring the coastguard cutter *Androscoggin* encountered eleven large bergs in rapid succession. Although she sounded her whistle on each occasion no sound was given off, and from this and other experiences the conclusion is that air echoes are erratic and not to be relied upon. The only bergs

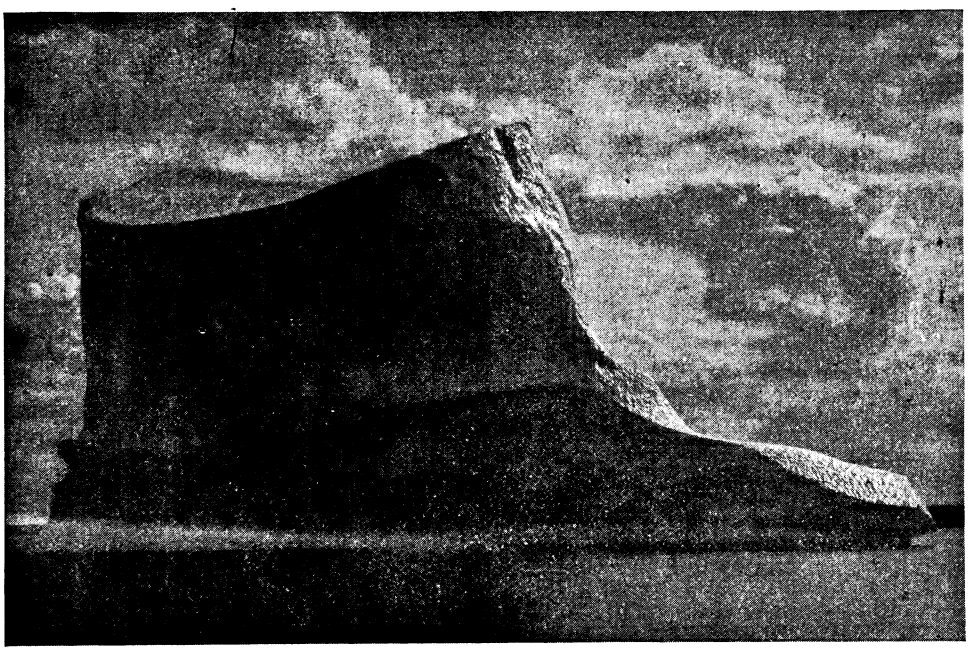


A DISAPPEARING ICEBERG AT THE ENTRANCE TO BATTLE HARBOUR,

from which echoes have been obtained have a perpendicular, or nearly perpendicular, face. Some echoes from such bergs have been heard at as great a distance as one thousand yards, but the majority were inaudible at distances greater than four hundred yards.

The patrol has shown too that, contrary to the belief of most mariners, there is no appreciable change of temperature in the air or water when a berg is approached. If a fresh wind be blowing and a ship gets within a hundred yards or so to leeward, the crew experience a sensation of cold, but the thermometer may not register any drop. Birds an old wooden ship labouring in a heavy sea.

At this stage of their career the bergs are often so delicately balanced that a mere touch is sufficient to upset them. There have been cases in which Newfoundland fishermen who wanted pieces of ice with which to pack their fish have been sent to the bottom through the berg turning over when the small boat hit the side. Such a scene was witnessed by a trawler which had sent out a boat to load ice. The directions to the crew were to cut chunks off the berg and return with them to the ship; but, to the horror of the remainder of the crew, the



A HAT-SHAPED BERG IN NOTRE DAME BAY, NEWFOUNDLAND.

do not, as some sailors affirm, indicate the presence of ice. They are more numerous around vessels where they can find something to eat. Again, there is no ice-blink over a berg. In brief, in hunting icebergs the mariner must to a great extent depend on eyesight alone.

In the late spring bergs become very unstable, owing to the corrosive action of the sea on their submerged portions and the action of the sun upon their upper parts. Large chunks of ice are continually falling off, while frequently the entire bergs roll over and over again, and are thus constantly changing formation. When the bergs roll over they creak and groan like huge mass of ice heeled right over and buried the whaleboat and its occupants in a whirlpool, while it almost drew the trawler into a watery grave owing to the surge. Even the whistle of a passing steamer has been known to cause huge blocks to fall from a towering cliff of ice.

The collapse of an iceberg spreads danger to great distances. The berg may be too far distant itself to threaten a craft, but the wave it raises will swamp the largest boat in the neighbourhood. When big bergs strand on the Newfoundland coast thousands of dead fish are cast up. Frequently bergs have stranded near the mouth of the narrow entrance to the harbour of St. John's, New-

foundland, and two seasons ago a berg blocked the harbour for weeks. The other season, though in the middle of July, a number of expectant towns on the east coast of Newfoundland were closed to an intended visit of the Duke of Connaught by heartless and inconsiderate icebergs.

An unusual iceberg anchored itself outside the harbour of St. John's a short time ago. Two boys in a rowboat pulled through the bottle-neck entrance of the Narrows and brought up close to the glittering ice. Just at that time the sun had almost completed its work. As the boys watched, the pinnacles slid apart and fell tumbling into the sea. The waves they raised rushed into the harbour and tore boats from their moorings.

The boys did not return. Friends set out with little hope of finding even a fragment of the boat, and they returned to mourn. The next day a fisherman leaving the harbour thought he heard weak shouts high up on the face of Signal Point, and, looking up, saw a waving arm. Away up there rescuers found boat and boys, and a man had to be let down the face of the cliff by a rope to take the lads to safety. The wave that had created such havoc within the harbour had lifted the boat and deposited it high and dry on a ledge of the 500-foot cliff!

Details as to the position of the bergs and floating ice are broadcast by the patrol vessels twice a day. If conditions are serious, messages are sent more frequently, sometimes as often as once an hour. On a single day a patrol ship may hear from as many as thirty to forty vessels, all within close range. This does not account for all the passing ships, for many do not reply to the broadcast.

Besides the warning to ships actually crossing the Atlantic, the patrol vessels send daily reports, via the Cape Rose Wireless Station, to the Branch Hydrographic Office of the United States Navy at New York. From this office the messages are made public by telephone to the various shipping offices, with the result that since the service was inaugurated fourteen years ago not a single ship has been lost through collision with an iceberg. The cost of the patrol is borne by all nations using the Atlantic in proportion to the number of ships sailing under their respective flags.

HIGHWAYS.

"WE'LL discover England," the great folk in their cars said,
"Old and merry England as she is to-day,
We'll find out all her secrets, her age-old secrets,
Her nooks and her corners near each great highway."

So they smoothed the highways, the great wide highways,
They made broad highways the length of England long,
The North, East, West ways, all the very best ways
Where their cars could go in comfort and speed along.

So on the highways, the great white highways,
All along the highways the busy cars go by,
Travelling over England, they think they're seeing England.
But they don't know England, for she is old and shy.

For breathless England, jolly old England
Laughed in her sleeve as they all rushed by,
And slipped down the side lanes all among the violets,
And had forty winks with a peaceful sigh.

So God bless the green lanes, the steep lanes, the rutty lanes,
God bless the hedges of hawthorn, blackthorn, rose,
Where old eternal England dwells undisturbed for ever,
And only the poor man knows.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.

BEATRICE HARRISON



FOYLE RIDING : THE GARDEN.
The cottage is on the left, the music room on the right.

By CLAUDE F. LUKE

Miss Beatrice Harrison is one of the foremost living 'cellists. Besides enthralling the thousands who attend her concerts, she has won a wide public interest by her success in luring nightingales to sing to wireless listeners by the charm of her playing from the grounds of her beautiful Surrey home. Her home and career are here described in a special interview.

"THOU shalt not covet thy neighbour's house"—says the Book. Of all the Commandments it is the one I break most regularly and with least repentance.

Ever since spending a day at Foyle Riding, the Surrey home of Miss Beatrice Harrison, I have sinned in this way more deeply than usual; have coveted every stick and stone, each rose tree, dovecot, and kennel that goes to make her delightful country home.

The house is two miles from Oxted station; a pleasant two miles winding up from the quiet little town over beautiful Limpsfield Common to its further wooded edge. If you can cover it in the dark red Crossley car which Miss Margaret Harrison drives with such skill, and note how policeman, postman, and villagers salute as you go by, you will already have learned something of the popularity of the "Harmonious Harrisons," as they are dubbed locally.

For Oxted is proud of its illustrious family, a family that has made the Surrey town a lodestone to many of the finest musicians of the world.

The most striking feature of the house and its tenants is the extreme "Englishness" of everything and everybody. It is as though a conscious effort has been made to frame English music in a typically English setting. You observe with relief that the family has not adopted French, Russian, or Italian names, for example, as do so many British musicians and dancers; nor have

they endeavoured to create that fake atmosphere of Bohemianism which some consider the *sine qua non* of a musician's home.

Instead you find a talented group that has made the ultra-English name of Harrison represent all that is finest in our nation's music; a family, moreover, that has British traditions quite apart from its musical heritage, for the Harrisons are as well known in both Services as they are in musical circles. The present head of the household, whose musical appreciation is unsurpassed by those named. I mean, the fourteen dogs, the six parrots, the twenty-three foreign birds, the scores of pigeons and doves—and the nightingales!

All these shall be introduced later, but first let us glance at the house and grounds. The view from the gardens shown in the photographs gives only a tithe of the beauty of the place. On the left can be seen the untouched Elizabethan farmhouse in which



BEATRICE HARRISON WITH "PETER," HER PRICELESS 'CELLO.

family is Colonel J. H. C. Harrison, a white-haired, lovable gentleman of the country squire type.

The personnel of the "Harmonious Harrisons" is six strong: the Colonel and Mrs. Harrison, who had an excellent voice in earlier days, Beatrice, the 'cellist, Margaret, her violin accompanist, May, and little Monica. Both of the last sing delightfully. The list, however, makes no mention of the really important members of the

the family resides; on the right is the Music Room, which was formerly a barn, and farther to the right (it can be seen in the picture of the family group) stands the Guest House, recently erected in the style of the other buildings, and so artfully conceived that already it wears an air of antiquity that cheats the casual eye.

The gardens cover twenty-three acres, and though six years ago, when the Harrisons arrived, it was all meadow-land, it has



BEATRICE HARRISON WITH "FREDERICK."

already become one of Surrey's "show" gardens. Flagged paths roam over its green face, with flowers and mosses between the stones. Sundials, stone seats, and flower-bowls please the eye at every turn, while dividing the buildings from the gardens runs a fine stone balustrade enclosing a paved terrace from which an excellent panorama of the estate can be obtained. This terrace the pigeons have made their own, the flat sundial and the stone gargoyles that mount the corners affording admirable perches on which to sun and preen their snow-white forms.

Each of the gardens has its own colour *motif*. One is sown entirely with blue and purple flowers, reflecting in the surface of a sunken fishpond. Another is a riot of roses whose scent pervades the path that runs between and makes it a favoured promenade on warm June nights. By dint of great labour the gardens have been raised in graceful terraces that climb to the house, and everywhere stone figures are cunningly set to foil the natural glories of the flowers and shrubs. Topiary is sparingly employed, though in the rose garden are a few "spiral" box trees. At every quiet nook stone and wooden seats tempt the dawdler, and on sunny days Miss Beatrice will often be found on one of them, her beloved 'cello between her knees, filling the garden with sweet music that mingles enchantingly with the piping of the feathered choir.

A crazy-paved pathway leads to the house, which is entered by a picturesque doorway guarded by a tall sturdy elm with dovecots nestling in its branches. Roses, clematis, and other ramblers wander over the door and round the diamond-paned windows, while peaches and plums ripen on the sunny wall.

The hall has a low ceiling supported by stout, aged beams. A handsome grandfather's clock faces an antique hall table, and pleasant red tiles, unrelieved by mats or rugs, pave the floor.

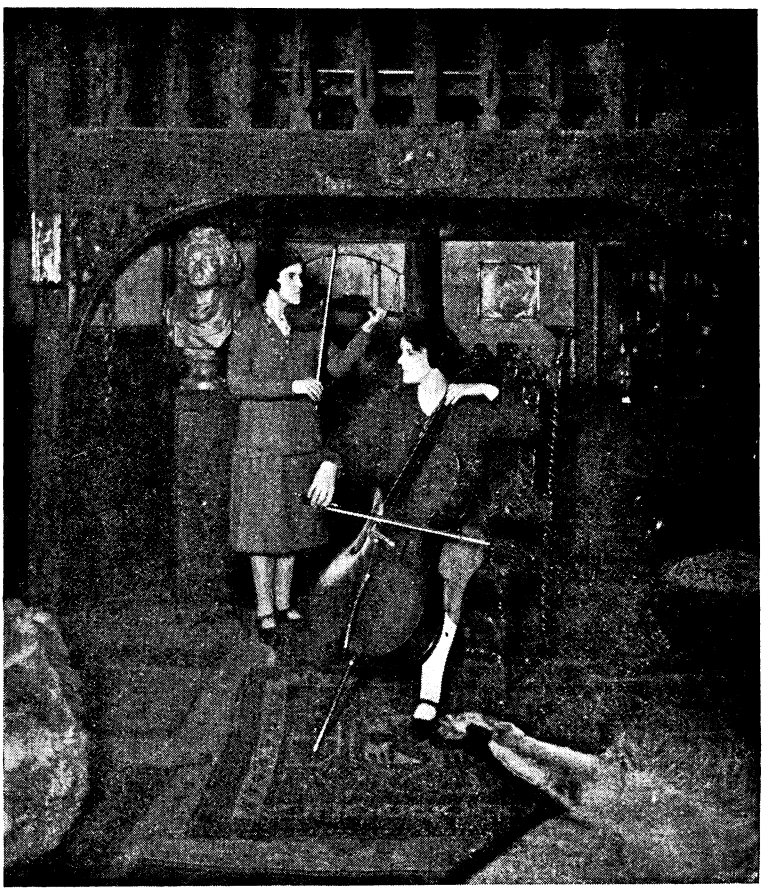
On the left of the hall lies a small room known as the Sanctuary. It is a household law that no one in a bad temper shall enter the Sanctuary, which is reserved for intensive study or meditation free from domestic distractions. The pictures on the walls of this quiet chamber are religious in character; one, a beautiful ikon in gold and coloured stones, is a souvenir of one of Miss Beatrice's



THE "HARMONIOUS HARRISONS."

Russian tours. Several low-seated chairs, real old fiddle chairs of the Queen Anne period, are about the room.

Leading from the Sanctuary a passage runs to the dining-room by way of a small drawing-room. Here is kept the wonderful 6-valve Atwater-Kent wireless set which was given to Miss Harrison during her recent American tour by Mr. Atwater-Kent himself. On the wall above hangs a picture



BEATRICE AND MARGARET HARRISON BENEATH ONE OF THE GALLERIES OF THE MUSIC ROOM.

of Foyle Riding, beautifully worked in silks, the work of an artist friend.

It is here, too, that the birds are housed in large, humane cages. Miss Margaret was in the act of introducing me to the parrots when I had occasion to produce a handkerchief. Instantly one of the parrots gave a lifelike impression of a sneeze and a cough!

"That's Sweetie!" exclaimed Miss Harrison with a smile. "She has learnt to sneeze exactly like my father directly she sees a handkerchief!"

As a rule parrots bore me; probably because the vocal powers so generously praised by their owners rarely function when required. These birds were different, however. Two grey ones, Sweetie and Pagliacci, were excellent fun. Sweetie hies from the Congo, and to hear her sing "Pop goes the weasel!" with variations in the last bar, or whistle the Elgar concerto, or call each of the dogs by name until the poor creatures are frantic with bewilderment, is rare entertainment.

Pagliacci, so called because of the extreme mournfulness of his ditties, can call "Monica" or "Beatrice" in their father's voice so exactly that even now they are constantly deceived. He is a born comic, too, as you would agree if you saw him

gravely lift his drinking-trough and place it inverted upon his head! His manners are faultless, for whenever he is inclined to eat, he grips the food trough in one claw and conveys it thus to his beak; *never* will he duck his head into the trough like his commoner brethren.

Two silent parrots are Tweedledum and Tweedledee, a South African couple, and the only pair of their kind, apart from one other at the Zoo, held in captivity.

But the bird of my fancy was "Wow Wow," self-christened, and the funniest parrot alive. He, too, comes from America, and the green and yellow of his feathers are as bright as his intelligence. When he is in good spirits he sings "Tipperary" better than the Old Contemptibles. In moments of abysmal gloom he croaks "There is a happy land, far, far away," as he did on the sea trip to England, when the stormy passage rendered his song particularly apt.

When asked to sing, he bows three times and gives a bashful snigger that has to be heard to be believed. It is for all the world like that of a schoolgirl asked to sing at her first party. But, like most schoolgirls, he survives his embarrassment after much coaxing, and sings his little piece. Then he sniggers once more, shouts his name three times in an alarming crescendo, and blinks rapidly at the company. If ever Miss Harrison should lack engagements, Wow Wow would earn for her a fortune on the Halls.



FIREPLACE IN MUSIC ROOM.

Apart from the wide fireplace with the row of ivories on its narrow shelf, the most striking article in the long dining-room is a banquet-table that can expand to accommodate sixteen people. It is centuries old and several London dealers have asked to be allowed to copy it. A small Gothic cupboard standing beside the fire serves as sideboard, its dark surface adding brightness to cut glass and pewter.

The most important, as well as the most beautiful, interior at Foyle Riding is that of the Music Room, which stands apart from the house. This fifteenth-century barn has been converted into a chamber delightfully suited to its purpose, the predominance of wood in its structure rendering it acoustically perfect. At either end is an ancient music gallery, one of which bears in each panel a coat-of-arms, once the property, as was the entire estate, of Lord Ocsted, whose name the district bears in a revised form. Each gallery will accommodate forty people, and when the Harrisons give private concerts the room will comfortably seat more than 120 guests.

Nearly all the furniture is genuine antique, much of it collected during various tours made by the musical sisters. A recent addition is a rare oak bed with the date, 1668, carved upon it, formerly in Kenilworth Castle. A cradle now filled with flowers was once the couch of the infant Charles I, or so the story has it, and in the fireplace there is another genuine oak cradle of the Jacobite period now prosaically used as a log trough!

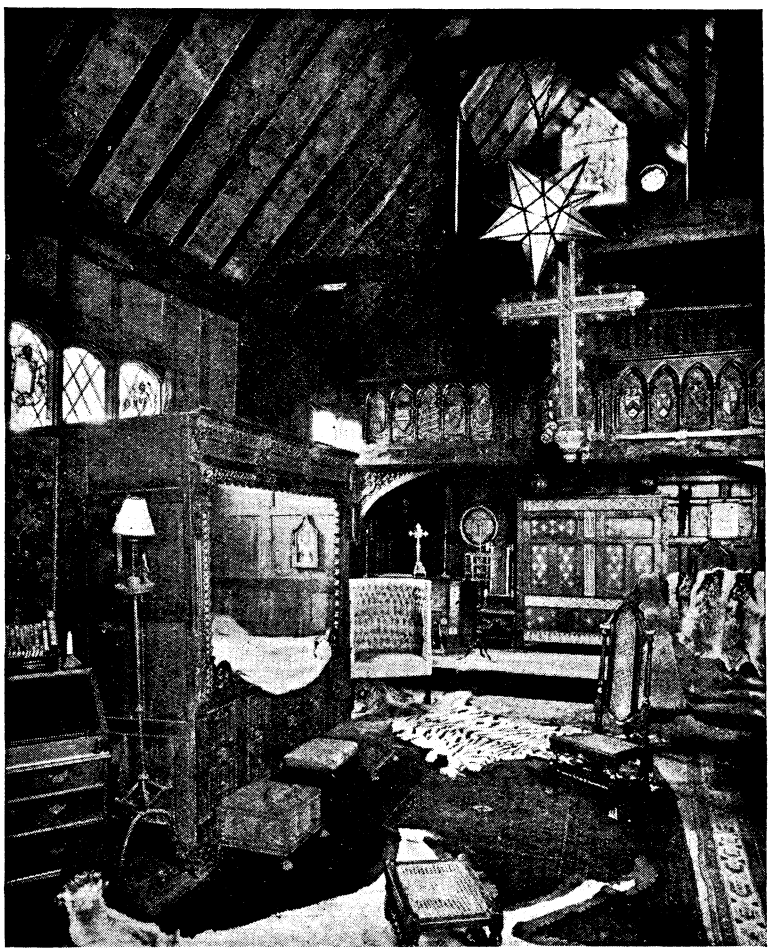
The religious *motif* of the Sanctuary is sustained in the Music Room in the sacred pictures on the walls—there is an excellent "Crucifixion" above the fireplace—in the church brasses, and in the handsome Franciscan cross given to Miss Harrison during a trip to Perugia.

Beneath the other gallery is a large terra-cotta bust of Beethoven. It was a gift to Miss Beatrice when, as a young girl at the Royal College of Music, she played one of Beethoven's sonatas and was heard by the Hon. Mrs. Elliott, who promptly offered her the bust, which had previously belonged to Jenny Lind.

In a house remarkable for its fireplaces, that in the Music Room transcends all others. It was designed, after five attempts, by Miss Margaret. A huge, spacious place, as you can see from the accompanying illustration, measuring ten feet across. A six-foot man could stand inside it without bumping his head.

Now let us go outside and meet the dogs. Except for an Airedale watch-dog (called "All Berks and no Bucks") they are all black Aberdeen terriers, so alike to a stranger that they seem to number nearer forty than fourteen! I was introduced in turn to Bennie, Laddie, Frederick, Tammy, Johnnie, and Peter, and then gave up further attempts to distinguish them.

"Frederick is probably the most important of them all," said Miss Harrison. "His full name is Frederick Delius, after the composer, for he was born on the day that the Delius Concerto was first performed. Tammy is a real old Scot; he fills the garden with his buried treasures. My father calls him the Royal Engineer because when he's not digging holes he's filling them in again! Bennie is perhaps foremost among them in



THE MUSIC ROOM.

The old oak bedstead has the date 1668 carved upon it. The gallery at each end holds forty persons.



THE DINING-ROOM.

musical appreciation. Certainly he has a genuine love of the 'cello. When I play he invariably sits up behind me with his paws on my shoulders and follows every note with the keenest enjoyment. It sounds incredible, perhaps, but when I am at work and anyone enters the room, Bennie raises a warning paw which we call 'Bennie's Salute.'"

After lunch, as we strolled in the gardens, Miss Harrison talked of her career. She was born at Roorkee, in a picturesque valley of the Himalayas, where her father was head of St. Thomas's College. When three months old she was brought to England, and at eighteen months she chose her career! At least she went to her first concert at the Queen's Hall, the annual concert of the Royal Engineers, and became so interested in the 'cellists (her mother declares that "she positively *ogled* the leader!") that she caused the swing seat to tip up so that her toes kicked off her own bonnet!

Almost as soon as she could walk she learned to play the violin, and at eight years of age she adopted the larger instrument that was to bring her fame and a considerable fortune. She was favoured in acquiring orchestra experience at an early age with the Royal Engineers' band at Chatham, where her father commanded the battalion to which the band was attached.

Two years later she won the gold medal of the Associated Board of the Royal College and Royal Academy of Music against 4,000 competitors in the *senior* department, both male and female, from all parts of the Empire. It was a great achievement for so young a performer and created no mean stir in musical circles, besides giving a worthy excuse for a riotous beanfeast among the R.E. bandsmen.

A short scholarship at the Royal College of Music, where she studied under Mr. W. E. Whitehouse, followed this success, and in her early teens she went to Berlin and studied with Hugo Becker. She had already won a fair measure of fame on Continental platforms, and it was while touring in Germany that she entered and carried off the senior competition for the Mendelssohn Prize. This honour is the goal of musicians of every nationality, and of every form of expression, including even the human voice, but Miss Harrison's 'cello was again triumphant.

When the then British Ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen, told the Kaiser that an English girl had secured their great prize, he was dumbfounded. "Impossible!" he said. "If it had been tennis, or some other sport, yes; but *music*—no! It is quite impossible!"

Miss Harrison is naturally proud of the 'cello which has shared her successes. It has probably endured more exciting experiences than any other instrument in the world.

"I call him Peter for short," she said as she fondled his darkly gleaming surface. "His real name is Pietro Guannerius. He is over 150 years old and, so the experts tell me, is the only violoncello Guannerius ever made. Anyhow, he is my greatest treasure, and the £5,000 I refused for him in America represents only a fraction of his value to me. Formerly he belonged to the Knoop collection and was for many years preserved under a glass case in Petrograd. Then he passed into the hands of a London firm, and I count it my red-letter day when I snapped him up."

After winning the Mendelssohn prize, Miss Harrison settled down to the series of long Continental tours that have made her name one of the most famous English names abroad. She is a particular favourite in

Germany, where her experiences have been many and varied.

"One day in Berlin," she said, "my mother and I were run away with in a horrid little cab. My 'cello—not Peter, fortunately—was smashed to atoms and I was a good deal knocked about the head. Luckily our horse was stopped by a young German officer, who disappeared afterwards without disclosing his identity.

"Another evening when I played under even greater difficulties was in Dresden, where I and my sister were due to play at an important concert in the Opera House, with Herr Schuch conducting. We were having tea before starting and I was cutting a small roll of bread, when the knife slipped and cut deeply into my thumb. See—I have the mark now.

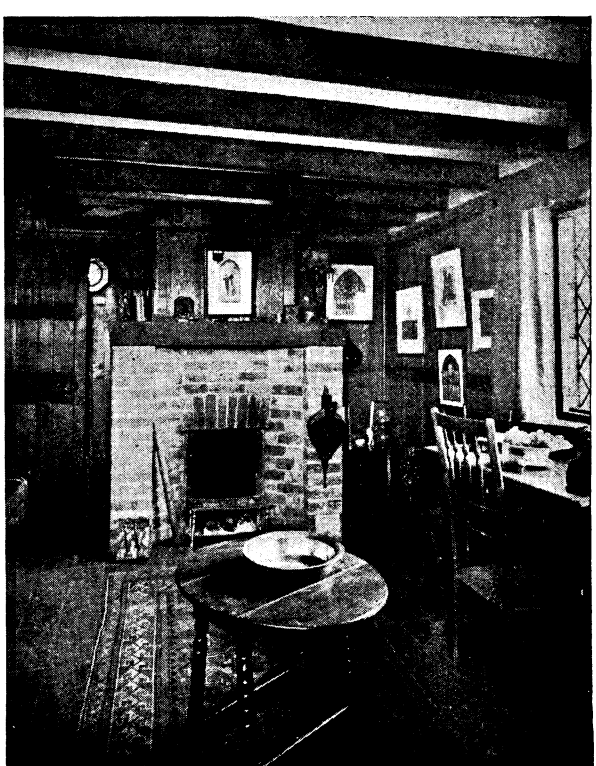
"A doctor was hurriedly sent for and he decided to stitch the cut at once. Just then an official from the Opera House, just across the Square, arrived to say 'the young ladies must come at once.' But, before going, I had to see whether I could play with a sewn thumb. On trying, I burst the stitches, and the thumb had to be sewn again, this time with much deeper stitches. This done, I hurried to the concert platform, as the audience had already been waiting a quarter of an hour.

"Well, my sister and I started off, but my thumb bled so freely that it had to be plastered up during the 'tuttis.' I think I never had a greater ovation. The audience kept on shouting 'British grit! British grit!' and the green-room was inundated with crowds anxious to see the injured thumb. During the night it swelled up, and I had to remain in bed all next day; but the incident bore good fruit, for somehow it earned for me a name for pluck in Germany, with the direct consequence that I secured eighty-three concerts the following season!"

Miss Harrison has toured Austria, Hungary, France, Holland, Scandinavia, Russia, and America. Before the War she played in Warsaw with Glazounow and was "called" thirty times, each time improvising a fresh encore. After the concert the jubilant audience seized her carriage, removed the horse, and insisted on dragging her and her beloved Peter to the hotel. She has toured America as a soloist with the famous Boston Symphony Orchestra, and with Mendelberg and the Philadelphia Orchestra, and Canada with Dame Nellie Melba. She has recently returned from another American tour, during which she introduced for the first time the now famous unaccompanied 'cello sonata in which the two lower strings are each lowered a semitone.

This beautiful piece is the work of Zoltan Kodaly, who wrote it specially for Miss Harrison. Delius was similarly inspired by her musicianship to write his 'cello sonata, and composed most of it in the grounds of Foyle Riding. Other composers who have paid tribute to her art with special compositions are Arnold Bax and John Ireland, also Herbert Hughes, whose delightful old Irish tunes she interprets so gaily. Sir Edward Elgar's Concerto is another work which she has caused to be linked inseparably with her own supreme technique.

From the earliest days of her career Miss Harrison has enjoyed the patronage of Royalty. She counts among her happiest memories the many Sundays she used to



THE "SANCTUARY."

spend at Marlborough House playing before Queen Alexandra, and is enthusiastic regarding the wonderful musicianship of Princess Victoria at the piano, and the appreciation of Queen Mary for all that is best in music.

We had by now reached an enclosed field on the estate where two pet donkeys live in a state that would cause a Socialist to tear his hair, for though their glossy coats bespeak well-fed lives, they have never yet done a day's work in return for their keep! Jerry is a gentleman with a near-crime on his soul, for there was a murky five minutes' interval in his young life when his startled hoofs all but silenced for ever the voice of Miss Harrison's beloved 'cello.

"We bought Jerry when he was no bigger than a dog," said his mistress. "The difficulty then arose how to transport him from our flat in Sloane Street to Foyle Riding. At last I chartered a taxi, and with 'Peter' and Jerry for company, we moved off. We had barely gone a hundred yards when Jerry poked his head out of the window and brayed so heartily that a passing motorist missed a lamp-post by inches only! Worse than that, Jerry began to kick up his heels in a decided fashion, threatening thereby to leave 'Peter' in bits. The journey ended abruptly, as you can imagine, and we all disgorged on the pavement before an inquiring crowd. Jerry eventually arrived here in a huge lorry."

Nor was that "Peter's" only narrow escape; on several occasions he has avoided drowning by the skin of his varnish only! During the War Miss Harrison found herself with her mother and sister in America. They had secured first-class berths on the *Lusitania* for the return journey and were within a few hours of sailing when Mrs. Harrison had a premonition that the boat would never reach England. Her daughters were inclined to pooh-pooh her fears, an attitude that was supported by the Naval Attaché, who told them that the *Lusitania's* speed made her immune from submarine attacks.

Mrs. Harrison was adamant, however, and in consequence they took indifferent accommodation on the *St. Paul*, from whose deck they waved to the ill-fated *Lusitania* as she slipped by them on her last journey. It is to Mrs. Harrison's credit that she has never once said "I told you so!"

Their own trip, however, was not without its thrills. In the cabin next to theirs were three men; their appearances on deck were exclusively nocturnal, and their chief occupation seemed to be heaving papers overboard. Miss Harrison overheard them conversing in German, arranging to meet in Paris and Berlin. The Captain was informed and the men were arrested at the port, one of them being subsequently shot at the Tower.

"Peter" braved the Atlantic on two other occasions during the War, his worst passage being that when the Harrisons left America for England in a very ancient craft, the *Philadelphia*. Half-way across news reached them that America had declared war on Germany, and the Captain confided to the Harrisons that if the enemy submarine that had just sunk two British vessels four miles astern had also received the news, the *Philadelphia* "hadn't a dog's chance."

Passengers were ordered to don lifebelts, noise of any kind was taboo, and all lights were extinguished. To increase the hazards of their position, the boat ran into a thick fog as it entered the Irish Channel. The family will never forget the picture of Miss Beatrice sitting calmly on a covered hatch with the lifebelt that she should have been wearing slung carefully around Peter!

"I had to do something," she explained to me. "You see, the insurance companies had refused to insure poor 'Peter' for as much as five pounds!"

But the ship *and* the precious "Peter" reached England without mishap, and the 'cello has survived to delight the hearts of a thousand audiences, as well as to bring, through the medium of the microphone and gramophone, the singing of the Surrey nightingales into millions of homes. For "Peter" and Miss Beatrice have between them drawn a choir of nightingales to Oxted, which for forty years had never heard the ravishing ecstasy of this king of feathered songsters. The birds, the flowers, and above all the divine music of Foyle Riding, make it a home thrice blessed; a haven of peace never to be forgotten; a dwelling whose atmosphere breathes the words of O'Shaughnessy's beautiful poem, which is gracefully illuminated on the walls of the Music Room:

"We are the music makers
And we are the dreamers of dreams,
Wandering by lone sea-breakers,
And sitting by desolate streams;
World losers and world forsakers
On whom the pale moon gleams,
Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems."

GAMBLER'S HOPE

By J. J. Bell

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," etc.

"*In yonder well lies treasure, ancient, rare,*
Rich gems,—a woman's hope, a man's despair."
ANON.

SYNOPSIS OF EARLIER CHAPTERS.

In a London hotel Flora Ballantyre, a Highland girl recently married, is suddenly called upon to "mother" a wee Spanish boy whose "madre" has died.

Nearly a quarter of a century passes. Flora, now Lady Ballantyre, and seven years a widow, has come to Spain and summoned Luis de Lara because she has been gambling and is in serious financial difficulties. Though a dozen years separate them, she is well aware that Luis's childish adoration has taken with manhood a warmer form.

She is hoping that her son, Steve, whose money she has also risked, will become engaged to Winifred Charters, who has £80,000 of her own. But during a yachting cruise in Scottish waters Steve has become attached to Ailsa Maclean, and he is arranging another cruise in the *Miranda* during the following August. Luis agrees to join the cruise, partly as a distraction from remorse (he has unintentionally killed a Spaniard during a brawl), partly because he is interested in a story of a Spanish dagger and a scrap of parchment possessed by Ailsa's father, Hector Maclean, concerning buried treasure to which his own father's papers make reference.

Faced with further depressions in "Flossies," Lady Ballantyre makes full confession to Luis and he sells pictures and other heirlooms to place the money to her account. These proceedings arouse the suspicions of his rascally deaf and dumb Spanish secretary, Gaspar Muñez, especially when Gaspar finds that Luis has discovered the fragment of bloodstained parchment relating to the treasure buried at Tobermory. Luis's first hope is that he may have the privilege, as a good Catholic, of restoring the jewels to the Church, to which they rightfully belong. Lady Ballantyre, however, sees in a successful search the possibility of restoring her fortunes. It is a "Gambler's Hope," and Luis, from his great love for her, eventually compromises with conscience.

At Tobermory, Hector Maclean and Ailsa prepare to entertain the *Miranda* party on their arrival. Hector dotes on his daughter and is puzzled and chagrined when she declares that she will not join the cruise. Her decision is a relief, however, to Hector's young partner, Ronald, who has long been in love with her and is jealous of Stephen. As the yacht steams into the bay divers are seen at work on the old, old hunt for Armada treasure. Luis and Lady Ballantyre are, however, on a quite different quest, for which Hector's co-operation is essential. He is a canny Scotsman. Can his interest be aroused? If so, at what price?

IX.

"THEY are coming ashore," Maclean remarked, shutting up his old battered binoculars and turning from the wall. "Are you not going down to meet them, Ailsa?"

"I must be seeing that Kate is doing everything right about the tea." Considering that Kate had been proving her efficiency as a housekeeper ever since Ailsa's childhood, it may be suspected that Ailsa was still thinking of "that Miss Chatters."

"Oh, very good," her father, of course, assented. "But it would be well to see that Kate does everything herself, when the time comes. That young Mairac gets so excited about nothing, she would be letting the things fall, and maybe falling down herself and affronting everybody."

"Don't worry, Daddy," said Ailsa a little impatiently. "Mairac would be greatly disappointed if she was not allowed to see the company."

"Well, well; just whatever you think

—and if she falls down, it will be the will of God. But tell her, Ailsa, she must not be saying ' It is a fine day,' when she is handing the cookies, and so forth, to the gentlemen."

"She will be too breathless to speak. Would you mind brushing your hair before they arrive ? "

"And was I not brushing it,"—he said "brishing "—"till my head was sore, half an hour ago ? " he demanded, rumpling his shaggy locks.

"Please don't be silly," replied Ailsa, and made for the house.

He looked after her, saying to himself: "Now what the devil is the matter, that she will not laugh at my fun ? "

Back at the wall, he was taking another spy at the *Miranda* when he became aware of an approaching tread, too heavy and measured to be his daughter's. He looked round, then stared in pleased surprise.

"Father Macdonald—well, well ! "

"Just myself, Mr. Maclean," answered the tall, portly elderly man, with the smooth, fresh-coloured face and benevolent eyes, who was dressed in what might be termed clerical holiday garb. He shook hands heartily, adding, "It is long since you have been in the Outer Isles, and, being in Tobermory, I could not help looking you up. I came on the *Cygnet* and am stopping at the Mishnish Hotel."

"Well, well ! " said Maclean again. "I am very glad to see you, very glad, indeed ! Come away to the house, and we will take a glass to our happy meeting. I have given up the business with your Outer Isles, but I can tell you that I am missing the trips and the meetings with the good people there, including your good self. So come away to——"

"Thank you, but I will sit here for just five minutes. Coming round from the road, I met your housekeeper, and she told me you were expecting company shortly."

"And what about it ? " cried Maclean. "Will there not be a cup of tea and a cookie to spare for a friend like yourself ? There will be only my cousin, Lady Ballantyre —you have heard of her husband, poor man, the M.P.—and her son, a nice lad, and their two guests on the *Miranda*—you would notice the yacht down yonder. And now that is everything settled, so——"

"Another time, if you will be so kind," said the priest, seating himself on the bench. "I am likely to be stopping in Mull for a week or two, and we shall meet again—many times, I hope. But now you will be wondering what can have brought me to Tobermory——"

"Where we are all heretics ! " Maclean put in, laughing. He had a grateful regard for Father Macdonald, who, many years ago, on his island home, had given first aid and shown him much hospitality and kindness after a driving accident.

"Even so," the priest mildly replied. "But I have not come to teach, only to learn. You know how I used to be daft on the subject of the place-names of the islands ; you will remember how, on your visits, we would sit up half the night arguing——"

"Yes, yes ! Surely I remember." Maclean sat down, a little disappointed concerning the dram.

"Well, then, I am dafter than ever ; for now, in my spare hours, I am writing a book ; and having got a short leave of absence, instead of going abroad, as in times past, I have come to Mull to learn what I can learn."

"A very good notion, and I could tell you of some people who would maybe be useful to you."

"I will remind you of that. Also, while I am here, I would like to learn something about this treasure-seeking that, I see, is still going on. I might write a small article about it."

"Another very good notion, and I can tell you a few things about it, and at the Mishnish you will likely hear more. But, of course, it is this house you must be staying in while——"

At this moment appeared the housekeeper and maid carrying small tables, followed by Ailsa with the cloths. Maclean called his daughter over.

"This is my lass, Ailsa," he said modestly, yet with the air of one presenting a princess. "And this is Father Macdonald, Ailsa, the good man who looked after me out yonder, the time I hurt my knee, when you were a little wee thing."

"I was not so wee that I am not remembering about it," she said, shaking hands warmly. "And you are very welcome, sir, for my father has often spoken about you. And if you are making a visit to Tobermory, it is this house you must be staying in."

"Just what I was telling him, Ailsa ! We will send a lad to the Mishnish for his bag, and I am sure my cousin, Lady Ballantyre, will be delighted to see him on the yacht this evening. So, you see, Father Macdonald, everything is arranged for you ! "

The priest, smiling, shook his head. "You are both very kind—too kind. But your father will tell you, Miss Maclean, of the nature of the business I am after in Mull, and you will see that I am going to be a roving, erratic sort of person, who is better in hotels. But you may be certain of my troubling you with my presence as often as possible."

When he had gone, Maclean once more looked down at the Bay.

"The launch is coming in," he announced. "I will go now and brush my hair till I hear them arriving." He glanced hopefully at Ailsa, who was laying a cloth. The servants had gone indoors.

Ailsa smoothed out the cloth, regarded it awhile, then ran to him and flung herself on his breast. "Oh, Daddy!" she sighed, and ere he could respond broke from his arm and fled to the house, leaving him to mutter distractedly in his native tongue.

In two minutes, however, she reappeared, along with the housekeeper, both bearing trays, all smiles and chatter, whereupon the doting father made incontinently for his office, where he sat, tousled head in clutching hands, toilet forgotten, till the striking of



"'While I am here, I would like to hear something about this treasure-seeking that, I see, is still going on.'"

a clock warned him that his guests should be at hand.

But, after all, he was to have a period of grace, for the guests on coming ashore had made first for the post office, a modern roomy building in the middle of the town.

For Lady Ballantyre there was a telegram from her London stockbroker, reporting a slight rally in "Flossies." She withdrew from the counter to read it, and her cheeks warmed as she wondered what Luis would think of her, if he knew. He had never asked her a question concerning her affairs, but she could not pretend to herself that she had not allowed him to assume that her Stock Exchange accounts had been closed soon after their talk in Algeciras. She hated deceiving Luis, despised herself for misleading him, and yet—if those wretched "Flossies" would only go up again, how much better it would be for him, apart from herself! Was this latest little rally, she wondered, only a flurry, or was fortune, at long last, going to turn once more in her favour? If she sold now, she would certainly recover a trifle from the wreck; but if she held on, she might redeem much—why not all? What should she do? Once again she was victim of the unlucky gambler's curse—infirmity of purpose. She went over to the partitioned table provided for the writing of telegrams, and used mainly for the directing of picture postcards. She wrote an order to sell—and tore it into tiny scraps; began another—and crumpled it up. For a moment or two her nerve seemed to be really going; but will prevailed. After all, there was no reason in haste. The Exchange was already closed for the day. She would sleep on the question and telegraph early in the morning.

She rejoined Luis.

"You have written your message?" he said. "Nothing troublesome, I hope."

"Might have been worse. I shall leave my reply till the morning. What of yourself?"

He showed her a packet almost half covered with a block of Spanish stamps and methodically sealed. "My attentive secretary has forwarded a budget which, I fancy, includes your belated letter; but I shall not open it till we are on board again. Shall we go?"

On the pavement Steve and Winifred awaited them. Steve pointed out a grey motor-launch, not large, but of seagoing build, which had just dropped anchor near the *Miranda*.

"That boat was in Oban Bay when we left. She must have speed, for I did not see her during our trip."

"I noticed her at Oban," said Luis indifferently. "Lady Ballantyre, I hope your good cousin will give us a cup of tea. Your Highland air has made me thirsty."

"Hector will give you anything you will take, from whisky to buttermilk. Our Highland hospitality is not a mere tradition!" She was feeling better already; almost certain that "Flossies" were going to rise. "Come," she went on cheerfully, as Steve and Winifred led the way, "let us get there. Hector will be wondering if I have forgotten the old road. You see, I did not come ashore last summer, and it is fifteen years since I was in Tobermory. By the way, Luis, you must understand that my cousin has not come down to meet us, because it is his belief that the host should be waiting at his own door."

"I agree. To my mind——"

For a bare instant Luis halted in his walk; then, as he went on again, he raised his cap and said something not in English.

Father Macdonald, who had been standing near the verge, surveying the bay, returned the salute with fine courtesy.

"Who was that, Luis?" Lady Ballantyre asked quickly.

"I do not know, except that he is a priest—and you told me I had no church here."

"He is a visitor, like ourselves!" she said. "But you spoke to him—in Spanish!"

"A common phrase of salutation, picked up in Spain—*Vaya usted con Dios!* It slipped out, somehow."

Lady Ballantyre smiled. "Always the good Catholic!" she said softly.

Luis said nothing.

While they climbed the hill, the dinghy belonging to the grey motor-launch was being rowed to the shore. The rower, who had the look of a mechanic, was apparently the crew of the launch. His passenger, a tall, spare man, in grey flannels, with a lean sallow countenance and black eyes, suggested a foreign tourist.

A little later, the tourist, carrying a suitcase, entered the Mishnish Hotel and in very fair English asked for a room reserved in the name of M. François Dracquier, of Toulon. Afterwards he went along to the post office, where he received a letter similarly addressed in typescript, and bearing a Spanish stamp. M. Dracquier, having

made himself acquainted with the contents, which even to one familiar with the Latin tongues would have seemed nonsensical, placed the letter carefully in his pocket and proceeded to write a telegram. The address was rather long, but the message was commendably brief—" Arrived."

X.

HECTOR MACLEAN received his kinsfolk with unaffected heartiness, their guests with that mixture of kindliness and self-respect which seems native to the Highlander.

" Well, well, Flora ! And is it really yourself back once more in the old place, and in such a splendid state of preservation, too ? I am very glad to see you, very glad, indeed ! And you, Stephen, we have been looking forward to your visit ever since you went away last year. Miss Charters, it is, indeed, a great pleasure to see you, and I hope you will be enjoying Tobermory and all that is round about it. Mr. Señor, I am proud to meet you. I assure you——" He became embarrassed by the sight of Miss Charters's long white legs, and hastily invited Luis to take a glass to the happy meeting, which presently Luis, like the good fellow he was, drank as though he loved whisky.

Ailsa returned Lady Ballantyre's kiss and shook hands with Miss Charters, in whose smile she suspected amusement, and hated the radiant creature on the spot. She had intended to be cool yet friendly with Steve, looking him calmly in the face, but the revelation of the other girl's beauty and smartness had upset her plans, and it was with averted glance that she gave him a limp hand, saying, " How are you ? It is a fine day." Thereupon she cried to herself, " Oh, you fool, to behave like a silly serving-lass that has never been out of Mull ! "

From the stricken young man she turned with a vague smile to Luis. He bowed over her hand. Normally the act would have embarrassed her ; now it had an oddly comforting effect, restoring dignity and confidence. And she was not displeased when, after a period of general conversation, he seemed to take it for granted that he should bear her company at the table from which it was her duty to dispense tea. It is true that Steve stepped forward, but she appeared not to notice him, and he returned to Winifred, who, a faint frown between her fine brows, was seating herself at the second little table. The third, in the shade, had been chosen by Lady Ballantyre for herself and the host, who for the following few minutes was somewhat lacking in urbanity, his anxiety being divided between his daughter and the young maid, Mairac. Gradually, however, he became reassured that Ailsa was enjoying herself, and that Mairac, despite her rosy, fatuous smile and audible breathing, which seemed to forebode a disruption of the well-filled bodice, was neither going to fall down nor address the gentlemen on the subject of the weather. There was reassurance, too, in the deportment of Kate, the housekeeper, who on this, as on all occasions of the mildest festivity, had assumed her most austere expression, going about her hospitable business with stern jaw and watchful, beady eye, as one ready to cope with any emergency, even unto the collapse or explosion of her plump, youthful assistant.

So Hector Maclean turned back to his cousin and in confidential tones put one of the questions that had been waiting at the back of his mind for the past twenty minutes or so.

" This Miss Charters, Flora—will she have stopped growing ? "

" Stopped growing ? Goodness, I should hope so ! Why, Hector, Winifred is twenty-two ! "

" Well, well ! Two years older than Ailsa —fancy that, now ! Then it will be an old frock she is wearing. I was thinking it was a pity—a pity, in a way—that her mother had not let it down for her."

Lady Ballantyre quaked daintily. " Really, Hector, you must lose no time in paying that long-promised visit to London. You must have gone to Canada and back with your eyes shut. Winifred is merely in the mode—the fashion, you understand—though, I admit, she is in the front row. Still, her knees are pretty enough to look the whole world in the face, don't you think ? "

" It is the world looking at her knees I am thinking about. I tell you, Flora, I got a fright when I noticed them first, for her face was not telling me she was a child. But afterwards I was thinking she might be a young lass who had sprung up over-quick, and so I was asking you about her. Well, well, I have not seen such a sight since I was at the pantomime in Glasgow, in the year 1898."

" You will soon get used to it. I confess I prefer Ailsa's length of skirt, and her

legs are just as nice as Winifred's—or my own."

"You are not the bashful lass you were, twenty-five years ago, Flora," he observed solemnly, yet teasingly, "but I suppose it is the London life and the politics that does it." He cleared his throat. "And this Miss Charters—will she be a very great friend of Stephen's?"

"Between ourselves, Hector," Lady Ballantyre replied, accepting the opportunity, "I should not be sorry to see her something more than a very great friend. In view of Steve's political future, it is necessary that his wife should have money. You see, it will be years before he can hope to——"

"Yes, yes; I see. And how much money would you be thinking a suitable sum, Flora?" His voice sank to a whisper. "For instance, if Ailsa was for getting married, I would be giving her a present of five thousand pounds"—he paused to learn the effect—"and, of course, when I am put away, Ailsa will have every penny that belonged to me. And I have already made over this house to her, though it is still a secret from her."

"Ailsa is, indeed, a fortunate girl." Lady Ballantyre, toying with the knife, looked down at her plate. It was not so simple as she had foreseen, and she had not thought of its being pathetic. Her intention had been merely to give Hector a hint which might, or might not, be needful.

"And what would you be thinking a suitable sum, Flora?" There was eagerness, if not anxiety, in the repeated question.

Lady Ballantyre hardened her heart. "My dear man," she said kindly, "in these times the young man with a political career before him cannot have too much. Winifred, when she marries, will have something like eighty thousand pounds——"

"Eighty! God help us all!"

"And her people have great influence, which is almost as——"

"To the devil with their great influence! I tell you, Flora——"

"'Sh!"—gently. "They will hear you."

Maclean drew himself up. "I ask your pardon, Flora. I—I was only making fun, though, maybe, I was a wee bit annoyed at hearing of so much money." He laughed weakly, and wiped his face with the big, new white handkerchief that Ailsa had taken care to put in his pocket. "We will be talking about something else." He turned towards his other guests. "Miss Charters, I hope Stephen is looking after you. Mr. Señor, I hope Ailsa is taking good care of you. I hope you are all getting plenty. . . . Well, Kate, what is it?" He may have been glad of the housekeeper's intervention.

The woman whispered that Ronald was waiting in the office to see him about a telegram.

"Bid him come here, Kate. I cannot be leaving my friends."

Kate hesitated. While devoted to her employer, she had her feelings for his young partner, and an old servant may take a small liberty now and then.

"Mr. Maclean," she said discreetly, "maybe Mr. Ronald would not be caring to come when you have company."

But Maclean was in the wrong humour. "Bid him come and drink a cup of tea with us. We are all friends here."

Before long Ronald emerged from the porch, carrying himself defiantly erect. At a little distance from the party he paused to make a stiff inclusive bow, then proceeded to his senior, to whom he handed the telegram.

"Don't you remember me, Ronald?" Lady Ballantyre was holding out her hand.

He took it courteously, respectfully, but without a word.

Steve had come over to add his greeting. These two had been friendly enough, a year ago. Now Ronald looked straight in the other's face and gave the hand a hard, brief grip.

"Come over to our table," said Steve, "and meet Miss Charters. It is her first visit to the West."

Ronald glanced, and his tan grew dusky. "You will excuse me," he muttered, "but I have no time."

Ailsa interposed. "But you will take a cup of tea, Ronald," she said, wondering at her father's slowness. "Señor de Lara," she went on, "let me introduce our good friend, Mr. Ronald Maclean. Ronald, this is Señor de Lara, a good friend of Lady Ballantyre's."

Ronald's eyes were smouldering—was this another of Ailsa's genteel admirers?—but his resentment was not proof against the frank smile of Luis, who was standing up, offering his hand, and saying—

"Since you do not care for tea, Mr. Maclean, will you smoke a cigarette with me?—that is, if our hostess permits?"

Ailsa smiled and nodded a little shyly. She was not used to having her permission asked about trifles—in Tobermory, at any

rate—and it was rather nice. . . . Besides, she was grateful to Luis. She would not have Ronald, whom she was now regarding with kind eyes, hurt or humbled.

Ronald accepted the cigarette, also a light, and pleased Ailsa by asking a civil question respecting the future route of the *Miranda*. It did not occur to her that he might be regretting his recent ungraciousness solely on her account. But he did not stay long.

"You will excuse me. The telegram needs an answer," he said, and went back to his partner.

A minute later, having repeated his stiff, all-embracing salute, he retired, as defiantly erect as on his entrance.

Steve had returned to his table, but was watching Ailsa and Luis, and Winifred repeated her question:

"Steve, why did not you present that handsome fellow to me?"

"He was shy of you in all your glory. But he's a good chap. He and I did some sailing together last summer. He is certainly not shy of nature——"

She laughed. "That is the nastiest one I ever got, even from you, Steve!"

Perplexity and vexation had dulled the young man's wits, and his answering smile was slow.

"Well, if you'll forgive me," he said lamely, "I'll make a point of presenting Ronald the next time."

"I'll pardon you now for a cigarette."

Steve gave her one, took another for himself, and remembered that Winifred was his guest, no less than his mother's, though his mother had invited her without his approval. Yet before long his thoughts were back to Ailsa.

How quickly she and Luis were making friends! The recollection of Ailsa's greeting rankled. What had he done? What had happened since she wrote that letter in Canada, five weeks ago? For it was a letter that seemed to carry a warmth on its pages, an assurance that she was really glad in the prospect of meeting him again. . . . And he was not sure that he wanted her to be very friendly with Luis; in fact, he wished now that they had not met. Had he foreseen such friendliness, he would have looked forward with different feelings to the cruise of the *Miranda*. Luis was his friend, more his friend than ever, since that ghastly confidence in the garden at Algeciras; but it was one thing to stand by a friend who, in a mad moment, had shed human blood, and another to watch that friend winning the regard of a girl like Ailsa Maclean.

"Is Miss Maclean also a sailor?" Once more Winifred's cool, clear voice scattered his reflections.

"Ailsa can handle a lugsail nearly as smartly as Ronald, but I think she is keener now on her new motor-boat. You can see it—that white one—down yonder."

Miss Charters did not exert herself to look. "I should guess one thing about the handsome Mr. Ronald," she said slowly. "He is badly in love with Miss Maclean."

After a moment or two Steve said:

"Is that your imagination, or your insight, Winifred?"

"It's my eyesight! But it's only my imagination when I suggest that she is in love with him."

"It is to be hoped," Steve said, with studied carelessness, "that you have made two good guesses."

A question of Ailsa's had set Luis talking about himself.

"You must not think, Miss Maclean, that I am ashamed of my father's country, any more than I am ashamed of my name," he was saying; "but nearly all my life has been lived in England, and my tastes, my sympathies and my best friends are English."

"Lady Ballantyre is one of your best friends?"

"The best of the best. I fell in love with Lady Ballantyre when I was eight years old."

"You have been knowing her all that time! Of course I have heard of you, Señor de Lara, but I was not thinking of you knowing her as a girl. I have heard she was very pretty; indeed, my father would tell you there was no one like her in all Mull."

"Do not you think her pretty now?"

"I think she is lovely. I have never seen blue eyes like hers, nor so fair a skin. Oh, yes, I admire her greatly, though I am a little afraid of her, too."

"Afraid? I wonder why."

"So do I. Maybe it will be because she is still a stranger, in a way, to me. I do not suppose you were ever afraid of her—were you?" Ailsa seemed to pull herself up. "I doubt that was a very foolish question."

Luis smiled. "Perhaps in my case it was an instance of love casting out fear—not that I have ever heard of anyone,

excepting yourself, Miss Maclean, being afraid of her. But you would understand me better, I think, if I were to tell you how it chanced that she and I came together."

Ailsa took a hostess's glance around before she said, "I would like to hear about it, if you please."



"Well, I was a youngster, and my mother and I were staying in one of the great London hotels, when, one night, she was taken suddenly and seriously ill. I was not by any means a brave boy, and when I was shut out of my mother's room, I was terrified for myself—terrified for my mother, too. The governess I had liked became my enemy, poor woman, and I hated the doctor. A chambermaid did her best for me and somehow got me to bed; but my little world was filled with fears, and after an age I slipped into the corridor and tried to get into my mother's room. I was behaving desperately when the lady we are speaking of appeared. Long afterwards I learned that she was on her honeymoon. I need tell you only that in some magic way she calmed me and coaxed me back to bed; that she told me fairy-tales until I slept, and

remained with me till I wakened in the dawn to hear the governess sobbing; that she told me the sad truth—it must have been a dreadfully difficult business for her—and cared for me through all the miserable hours till my aunt arrived from Devonshire.

"Fate compels. But, as you see, I am not quite a prisoner. Now, suppose you tell me——"

Lady Ballantyre had come over. "Ailsa, your father is going to show me the alterations he has had made to the



"Lady Ballantyre hardened her heart. 'My dear man,' she said kindly, 'in these times the young man with a political career before him cannot have too much.'"

. . . That was the way of our meeting, Miss Maclean—and now I am wondering why I should have told you about it."

"It—it is no wonder that you are fond of her," said Ailsa, with a blink. "And—and now you are living in Spain."

old house. Will you bring the Señor?"

"Very well," the girl answered—and hesitated. To strangers her father was apt to display the piano and billiard-table as though they were the only things of their kind in the world. Then her head went

up. "Would you care to see the house, Señor de Lara?"

"Call him just 'Señor,' Ailsa. We all do. He will feel more at home," said Lady Ballantyre, and went back to her cousin.

"I should like to see the house," remarked Luis. "I am interested in everything that is old."

"The old things have gone," she replied; "but you will be very welcome."

Lady Ballantyre had not extended the invitation to the couple at the third table, but her words had been heard there. Steve glanced inquiringly—perhaps too eagerly—at his companion, and made to rise.

Winifred did not move. Much may be done in this busy world by just sitting still.

Ailsa, glancing back from the porch, assumed that they preferred their solitude, burned for an instant, froze, and abruptly decided that, after all, she would accept Lady Ballantyre's yachting invitation.

Although it was ingenuous, Hector Maclean's pride in his hall—he refused to call it by the undignified Sassenach name of "lounge"—might have been deemed vulgar, at all events by a stranger of limited understanding, and again Ailsa liked Luis for his way with her father.

"It is a place like this that I have wanted for my gloomy old house in Spain," he said, thinking, without malice, how the antique magnificence of that lordly mansion would strike his host speechless, probably with dismay. "What a beautiful piano!"

"Play something, Señor," said Lady Ballantyre, slipping her hand into Ailsa's arm.

"Please," murmured the girl.

Obediently, rather than willingly, Luis seated himself, frowned at his fingers, and suddenly dashed into a Chopin mazurka. A Brahms' waltz followed, then a couple of Spanish dances. Lady Ballantyre felt Ailsa quiver.

Luis got up. "My fingers are stiff, but it is a perfect piano, Mr. Maclean."

Though the music had meant nothing to him, Hector Maclean rose grandly to the occasion. "By Goodness, Mr. Señor," he cried, "I have never seen so much agility!"

The Señor bowed gravely and turned to Ailsa, who had moved a little apart from Lady Ballantyre.

"It is not the music for your Highlands," he remarked.

There was a glow on her face, a gleam in her eyes. "It was just wonderful," she said, then gave a laugh. "But I am afraid, Señor, you are not really so very English."

He made a gesture of mock despair, and she laughed again—and caught herself up, wondering how she could laugh when her heart was in mourning.

Watching her countenance, he saw the change and guessed the cause. Pointing to the piano, he silently invited her to play.

She shook her head. "I have only the schoolroom sort of music, and I am not so foolish as to be playing it now."

"There is a violin on the *Miranda*," he said. "I am a poor viol—fiddler, but perhaps, when you come on board, we shall find some music we can try together. The piano is nothing like yours, but it is not bad, I believe."

The host interposed. "And this, Mr. Señor, is the billiard-table." In his pride he may have pronounced it "peelliard."

Luis hastened to admire, and just then the housekeeper appeared to request a word with Miss Ailsa, who apologised and left the room. On her return she found a chance to tell her father that she had changed her mind about the cruise, and thereby made him look happier than he had done since the morning.

Lady Ballantyre, also, found an opportunity.

"Are you finding the task too hard, Señor?" she inquired, it may have been a trifle mockingly.

Unsmilingly he replied, taking a cue from the rack: "Perhaps too easy, Lady."

"Come, Flora," called Maclean blithely, "and I will show you the rooms upstairs. They will, maybe, not be so interesting to the young people."

"Young people, Hector! So much for my splendid state of preservation!" She took her kinsman's arm, and they went out hilariously; yet, perhaps, Lady Ballantyre, like Ailsa, paused to wonder how she could laugh.

When they came back at the end of half an hour, it was to find the young people still at the billiard-table, whereon Luis was making the balls do miraculous things.

"God bless me!" muttered Maclean, halting at a distance. "What marvellous fellow is this you have brought to Tobermory, Flora? Who the devil is he?"

To Lady Ballantyre it was as though the hour had struck—too soon. Her cousin had given her the opening required, but was she ready, calm enough, to use it? Feigning

to be interested in the Señor's performance, she thought rapidly.

But Luis stopped abruptly, saying: "Enough of my monkey tricks! Will you play a game with me, Miss Maclean?"

"I can hardly play at all, but just as you wish," Ailsa replied—and remembered that she was a hostess. "Only, maybe, Miss Charters might wish to——"

Alert at the name, Lady Ballantyre said: "Have your game, dear. You won't get an instructor like the Señor every day. Steve and Winifred would have come indoors by now, if they had not preferred the garden." To her cousin she said softly, "Take me outside, Hector, and I will tell you something about—the marvellous fellow."

A further instalment of "Gambler's Hope" will appear in our next issue.

"SLOWNESS IS BEAUTY" (RODIN).

SLOWLY the bent green frond of the fern uncurls
A growth of beauty and wonder
Deeper than anyone knows,
Slowly the wakening bud unfurls
Petals that part asunder
And show the red heart of a rose.

Slowly the pallid moon swings up High Heaven's arch,
Slowly as rhythmic melody
Set grandly to the measure of a march
In full deep harmony.

Slowly the cosmic sun lightens the feathery breast
Of cloud, till his compelling ray
Rims with pale gold the palpitating East
And wins the sky and earth for glorious day.

Slowly, with skilful steps, they danced erstwhile the dance
Within the palace of a Queen,
Imbuing with the glamour of romance
The charm of perfect pose in studied mien.

Slowly, slowly, from unresponsive stone
The hand of the sculptor fashions a limb, an arm,
Exquisite form, with poise and grace
Reaching onward and upward to life in the beautiful face,
And behold the marble grown
A creation strangely vaster;
Ardent, vigorous, warm
With the soul of the Master.

MAY I. E. DOLPHIN.

THE WHALE

A VERACIOUS EPISODE OF THE WAR

By E. G. Boulenger

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES GRAVE



"The memory of the cold will remain."

NO man who served on the Western Front during the winter 1916–17 is likely to forget the War. When all other miseries have faded from his mind the memory of the cold will remain.

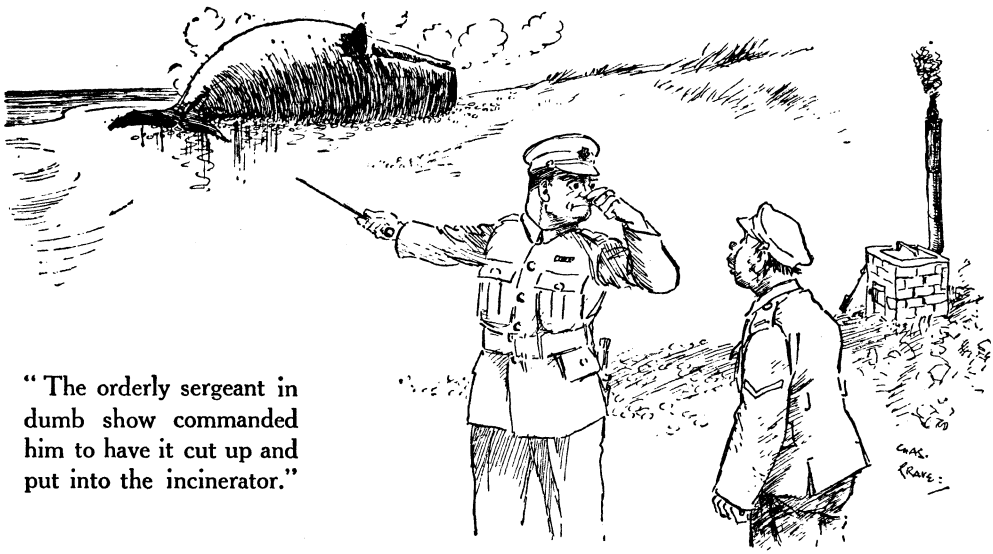
Far behind the lines, in the little coastwise village of St. Aubert-sur-Mer, the art of slaughtering men gave second place to that of keeping the living alive through a frost that crippled every activity for good or evil. In billet No. 207 the officers of the 99th R.F.C. Depot were huddled in greatcoats and several sets of underclothing round a smoking stove that began to extract some heat from the smouldering, sea-soaked logs.

A private entered encumbered with a fresh supply of water-logged timber, encrusted with weed and barnacles. At the same moment entered the adjutant.

"I have some cheerful news for you fellows," he shouted. "The bally old mayor has put in a claim for every stick we've picked up off the beach for the last six weeks; and, what's more, it's gone through. We're to pay for it out of the mess funds. All rot? Not a bit of it; you wait till you see it in orders to-morrow night."

The prediction of the adjutant proved only too true, for the claim was made and eventually paid for the sake of peace and quiet, but the incident poisoned the social atmosphere. Monsieur le Maire, proprietor of the Hôtel de la Couronne, rejoiced in the new source of income that now came his way undisputed, but groaned nightly at the absence of all khaki from his select café-restaurant.

Then, most opportunely, the tension was one March evening relieved by the arrival of the whale. Curiously enough, this synchronised with a sudden rise of temperature, the first hint of a warm spring, to be followed by a warmer summer. The whale lurched inshore, belly up, beneath a canopy of shrieking gulls. A youthful sentry on the beach was the first human being to observe it. He fired two random shots into the object and scurried inland to report the arrival of a U-boat.



" The orderly sergeant in dumb show commanded him to have it cut up and put into the incinerator."

Pale with terror but full of importance, he burst into billet No. 207 with the news.

" My word, she don't 'arf stink. Either the crew 'ave been dead for weeks or 'er oil tanks 'ave bust."

The immediate effect of the whale, when once fairly aground, was temporarily to demoralise the soldiers in the neighbourhood, inspiring normally conscientious and well-disciplined warriors to risk the direst penalties in order to gaze fascinated at the vast bulk that mysteriously grew with every hour of sunshine. The authorities regarded the stranded creature as an ill-timed flippancy on the part of Nature and ordered its removal, a duty which was relegated to the 99th R.F.C. Depot. The matter and manner of disposal was being discussed one night after dinner when one of the brighter lads of the party pointed out that it had been established that anything washed ashore became the property of the mayor of St. Aubert, and that, therefore, he and he alone, as owner of the stranded monster, was responsible for its removal. This logical point of view was put before the mayor on the following morning, and he was politely and firmly requested to remove his property. Monsieur le Maire was equally polite and firm. He regretted " infiniment " that, owing to lack of man-power, he was unable to comply with the request of *messieurs les officiers*. He waived his claim to the animal and dismissed the spokesman with the somewhat over-worked expression, " C'est la guerre."

The acting lance-corporal in charge of the sanitary squad washed his hands of the whale from the moment when the orderly sergeant in dumb show commanded him to have it cut up and put into the incinerator. The more practical-minded Medical Officer hastily estimated the quantity of chloride of lime he might require and, knowing official-dom, wisely indented for ten times the amount calculated to render the beast non-prejudicial to the general health. By the end of ten days the chloride of lime had not arrived and the Colonel put the whale and 400 yards of beach on either end of it out of bounds.

It must have been nearly a month later that the Colonel interviewed an expert in an orderly-room that had been moved to more commodious premises farther inland, where the windows did not face seawards. The expert, an alleged ex-whaler, had been collected from a far-distant unit as the result of some three hundred closely typed pages of correspondence with Army H.Q. He was an apparently honest man, and stated, more or less on oath, that the only way to dispose of a whale was with a whaling hook. He took some pains to describe the implement, a sort of glorified scythe, but regretted that he had not one with him. He had left all his implements in the Falkland Islands. The whaler retired with honours, attached for rations, and discipline, and was to remain at the R.F.C. Depot in the capacity of adviser.

The official mind was now thoroughly aroused and on its metal to uphold its high traditions. The whale, of course, had *got to*

go. A regiment of the Blankshires, who were at "rest" in the neighbourhood, were employed for six days in attempting to remove it, yet it still remained—if possible larger than ever. It lay by day and night, an unsightly horror and a menace to health, its vast mouth curved in a sardonic smile. The efforts of some 500 Portuguese labourers who arrived towards the end of April to dispose of the animal in no way disturbed its equanimity, their knives making less impression on the whale than on themselves. Only the crabs, facetiously termed the "night shift," honeycombed the leviathan's beach-most portion. The monster settled comfortably into the shingle, apparently "for the duration."

"Thank Heaven," said the M.O., as he viewed it one night nearly two months after its arrival, through the safe medium of long-range binoculars. "Thank Heaven, I go on leave next week. Shift it and they will have to shift the village."

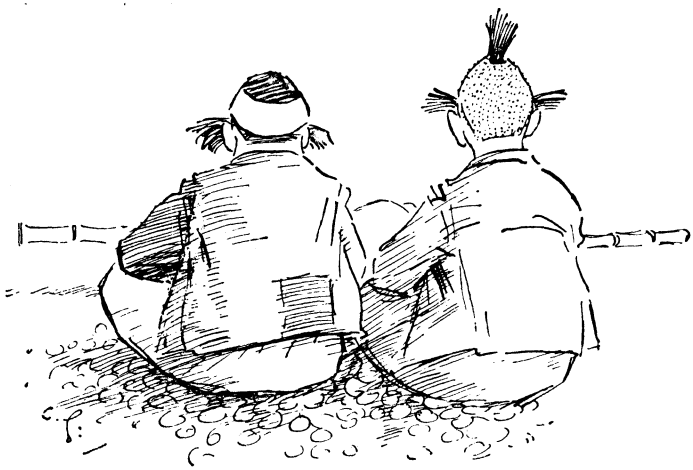
"Don't be such a pessimist," replied the adjutant, who was standing by; "the animal will be shifted before you return from leave. We're being sent the whole of the 14th Chinese Labour Corps to-morrow. Chinamen can't smell, so they ought to clear it up quickly enough." . . .

A few days later the acting lance-corporal in charge of the sanitary squad, case-hardened to manure dumps, dust-bins, and such salubrious scenes of human toil, lay at his ease upon the cliff, watching below a swarm of yellow-faced, blue-clad figures that crawled and slithered over and around a vast glistening mass, darker on its underside and sickly white above, the white relieved with patches of sulphurous yellow.

"Take it easy, boys! Don't strain yourselves!" He chuckled benignly on two typical Chinks who bore between them a mass of whale fat weighing some score pounds, suspended from a bamboo pole. Suddenly and apparently by mutual consent they deposited this on the beach, squatted down beside it, closed their eyes, and appeared to pass into a species of trance. The lance-corporal lit another cigarette. "I only hope H.Q. won't get the wind up about these typhoid rumours and send us twenty miles inland where there is no bathing," he mused to himself. "Hullo, if that



"Two typical Chinks who bore between them a mass of whale fat."

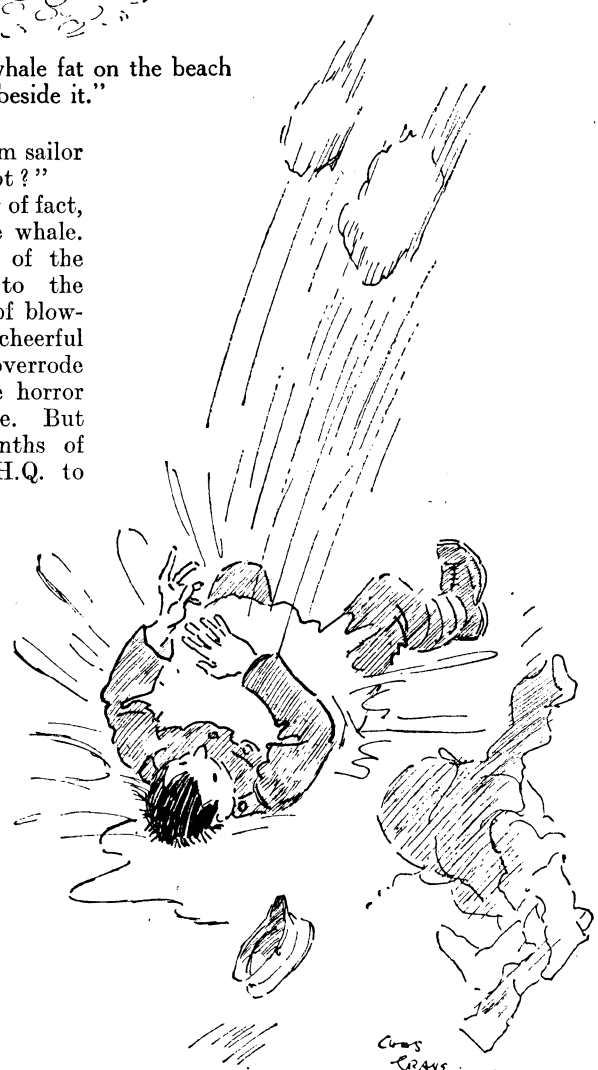


"Suddenly they deposited the whale fat on the beach and squatted down beside it."

ain't a gun-boat. Wonder what them sailor chaps would do with our little mascot?"

The Senior Service did, as a matter of fact, eventually solve the problem of the whale. Quite unofficially, the Commander of the T.B.D. propounded that night to the Colonel after dinner the feasibility of blowing the whale into the blue. The cheerful assurance of his guest completely overrode the conventional Colonel's intensive horror at the irregularity of the procedure. But he was too broken by three months of acrimonious correspondence with H.Q. to let slip this promise of release. To think that at dawn the following day—for so it was arranged—a depth charge and a time fuse would accomplish what three weary months of correspondence, not to mention other hindrances to winning the War, had failed to do. Mind had at last risen triumphant over matter. The whale was to succumb to the Nelson touch.

It is to be regretted that no authoritative person was up sufficiently early to give an account of the whale's actual dissolution. The only indisputable eye-witnesses of the event appear to have been a sentry on duty by the shore and a certain 17026 Private G. Perkins, batman of D Company. The sentry, in orderly-room, made a rambling and highly unsatisfactory statement. A few points alone were clear, and summarised stand thus: (1) About 4 a.m. he was sheltering from a keen wind in the structure provided when he heard a tremendous explosion—"like 'ell opening." (2) "From 'eaven descended a rain of glutinous substances." At this point the sentry was hastily dismissed, to be at once issued with a new uniform, and the windows were opened to purge the air of an offen-



"A similar issue took me and the washing and laid us both out for the moment."

sive aroma which the Colonel alleged arose from the uniform worn by the sentry while giving evidence.

The account of Private Perkins was more satisfactory :

" As I was hurriedly walking up the Rue de Boulogne in St. Aubert with a bundle of washing there was suddenly a kind of muffled bump from the coast. This was immediately followed by a thing like a spring mattress made of 'alf-set glue coming straight from nowhere and wrapping itself round my 'ead."

Here Private Perkins spoilt his otherwise consecutive and well-worded official account with some obscene though no doubt veracious details, for which he was severely reprimanded. Continuing, he said, " I 'ad scarcely recovered from the shock, sir, when a similar issue took me and the washing and laid us both out for the moment. The air was so thick with the muck that I crawled into the nearest doorway and waited for the shower to go over. I saw things—dozens of them—big as puddings raining out of the sky. If one of them hit a wall it spread out as big as a cart-wheel. The windows of the Hôtel de la Couronne were fairly wrecked, sir, and the walls plastered. After the worst was over, however, it settled down to a kind of tropical shower, rain-drops as big as soup-plates and thick as honey. The smell of whale, sir, was so overpowering that I made a dash while the going was good."

Next day was Sunday and the padre gave a sermon on " How a small matter may lead to far-reaching results," and those not too busy with their game of poker went to his evening lecture on the " Wonders of the Deep."

As to the mayor, he sent in a claim for material and intellectual damages—which was allowed.

MARY IS THREE.

THE world smiles on Mary, for Mary is three,
And that is the very best age one can be ;
Relations and neighbours and strangers and friends
Exist for the purpose of serving her ends.

If Mary would breakfast, a farmer somehow
Gets wind of the matter and milks his best cow ;
Then round comes the milkman with measure and can,
For all work together according to plan.

If Mary would travel, the railwaymen know
Neither where nor with whom nor how soon she would go—
Yet when she arrives at the station, they *guess*,
And off goes a train in five minutes or less.

If Mary would buy a new hat or new shoes,
A shopman is waiting to study her views ;
And though he takes silver to put in his till,
I know he cares only for Mary's good will.

When Mary grows old—perhaps when she is ten—
I'll tell her that things must go wrong now and then ;
But little she'll care for my warnings or me—
Meanwhile life is pleasant, and Mary is three.

C. W. W.

'SERVICE'

By DORNFORD YATES

Author of "Berry and Co.," "Jonah and Co.," "Anthony Lyveden," "Valerie French," "The Stolen March," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY P. B. HICKLING

WHEN my friend George Scarlett purchased a lease in Hay Street and took to displaying and offering second-hand cars, I confess that I feared the worst. But, when, after eighteen months, he was making two thousand a year, I owned my judgment faulty and took off my hat.

"It's the personal touch," said George proudly, from behind a cigar. "Never press: never argue: never make the running. If they want to get off, help them. If they like you, they'll like the car. That's why I won't pay Aitken commission. If I did, he'd rush his fences sure as a gun."

"What about the Roquefort?" said I.

The Roquefort belonged to me. She was very long and low, she was open, and she weighed just under three tons. She was extremely comfortable and handsome. Her bodywork was a dream. She had the heaviest clutch and steering of any car I have known. She did ten miles to the gallon, and, after a quarter of an hour, she would boil on a winter's day. *Boil.* After having her engine down once and changing her radiator twice, I came to the conclusion that the car was bewitched. George had been trying to sell her for nearly three months.

"Ah," said George. "That isn't everyone's car."

"It must be someone's," said I.

"She's greatly admired," said George. "I'm quite glad to have her in the shop."

"I'd take six hundred," said I, "to be rid of the swine."

George shook his head.

"It isn't the price," he said. "She's—she's overwhelming. People are frightened of her. If I offered her at less than a thousand, they'd smell a rat."

I sighed, and we left it there. Nine months ago the Roquefort had cost me two thousand two hundred pounds.

It was nearly a week later that George rang me up.

"Listen," said he. "You can help me. Aitken is sick of his stomach, and I've to go down to Surrey to look at a car. Will you take my place at Hay Street this afternoon?"

"I'm not keen about it," said I. "What's the matter with the boy?"

"He's not a salesman," said George. "He can attend to the telephone and open the door: but he can't sell."

"But you're often both out, George. Surely the boy can be trusted to——"

"I know," said George, "but somebody's coming this time. I made the appointment last night. A 'Miss'— Wait a minute. . . . Here we are. 'Miss Agatha Sword.' When we were up at Magdalen, her brother was up at the House. That Lowland coupé's the very thing for her. Put it in at six hundred, will you?"

"I don't half like it," said I. "And I'm sure to mess it all up. Can't you——"

"That's a good fellow," said George. "I expect she'll want a trial run. Mind you——"

"I've not said I'll do it yet. Why don't you——"

"That's all right," said George. "Knew I could depend upon you. You'd better pose as a partner. Two o'clock sharp, laddie."

Before I could demur, he was gone.

When I rang him up ten minutes later, the line was engaged. When I rang him up half an hour later, the boy seemed pleased to inform me that George had gone out.

At five minutes to two that day I took up my command.

It was a restful business, not to say dull.

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The boy sat in the office, reading the racing news. I sat on the step of the Roquefort, awaiting Miss Agatha Sword. Sometimes I strolled round the Lowland which I was to sell. This was a nice-looking coupé and was worth about half her price. I began to see how it was that George was able to make two thousand a year.

It was twenty minutes to four when a taxi drew up, to disgorge Miss Agatha Sword.

When I saw her, I was glad I had come. I think that was natural. Her physical attractions were outstanding, and she had a most charming smile. Her hair was very dark, and her eyes were grey. Her figure was slim and her legs were above reproach. There was a hint of wilfulness about the set of her chin.

As I opened the door—

"I'm afraid I'm awfully late," she said sweetly. "Are you Mr. Scarlett?"

"I'm afraid I'm not," said I. "My name is Wrotham. George Scarlett's been called away. He was very upset about it; but his—our nagsman's gone suddenly sick, and he had to go down to Surrey, to take his place."

"Oh, I'm sorry. Did he tell you about me?"

"He said that you wanted a car."

Her eyes wandered over the Roquefort.

"He said," she said slowly, "that he had the very thing for me."

"I hope he was right," said I, moving towards the Lowland.

Still looking at the Roquefort, she followed me round.

"Now that's a nice car," said I, throwing open a door. "Last year's model. Only done four thousand miles."

Miss Sword looked into the coupé.

"There's not very much room," she said.

It was a very big coupé.

By way of answer, I revealed an occasional seat.

"What I mean is, I want it for touring. My sister and I are going to tour in France."

"Without a chauffeur?" said I.

"Oh, yes."

"Then I think this should suit you," said I. "There's plenty of room for two, and she's got a big boot."

Miss Sword stepped back and appeared to measure the car.

"She's not very long, is she?"

No one could have called her short.

"I think, perhaps, that's because of the Roquefort," said I. "She's quite abnormally long. And, standing beside the Lowland, she makes her look short."

Miss Sword regarded the Roquefort.

"I must say I like length," she murmured. And then, "I'll bet she rides well."

I returned to the Lowland.

"I don't want to bother you," said I, "but, unless you don't like coupés——"

"Plenty of room there," continued Miss Sword. "Think of the luggage that you could put in the back. And she's got a trunk, too."

She was still regarding the Roquefort—with a curious light in her eyes.

A sudden, dreadful suspicion leaped into my mind.

For a moment I stared at her blankly. Then—

"You—you're not thinking of that?" I stammered. "I mean, you're not seriously thinking——"

"Why not?" said Miss Sword. "I prefer an open car."

"But, without a chauffeur——"

"There are two of us to manage the hood. May I try the seats?"

Feeling rather dazed, I opened the Roquefort's doors.

Miss Sword sank back on the cushions with a sigh of content.

"We could sleep in this," she said.

I swallowed desperately.

"I think that, without a chauffeur——"

"I simply love driving," said Miss Sword. "She *is* a beautiful car. What are you asking for this?"

"A—a thousand pounds," said I miserably.

"What year is she?"

"She's a last year's model. But I—she isn't everyone's car. She's awfully heavy, you know."

Miss Sword got out and stood back.

"She's one of the best-looking cars I've ever seen."

"I know, but——"

"A thousand pounds," said Miss Sword. "Does that include everything?"

"Yes," said I. "Except the petrol. She's pretty heavy on that."

"That's natural enough," said the lady, "with a car of this size. Can I have a trial run?"

"Of course," said I. "You shall try and buy what you please. To be perfectly honest, I'd rather sell you the Lowland."

Miss Sword smiled dazzlingly.

"You're very frank," she said. "But you shouldn't have let me see this. There's no comparison, is there?"

I filled up with water and petrol, and we picked our way to the Park.

The Roquefort behaved superbly.

I did not spare her, but she could do nothing wrong.

My companion was loud in her praise.

"I'm bound to tell you," said I, "that she's running unusually cool. As a rule, she gets very hot."

"I don't think that's a fault," said Miss Sword. "Half the cars of to-day are over-cooled."

I drew up beneath the trees and played my last card.

"I think you should drive her," I said.

Miss Sword shook her elegant head.

"You're awfully kind, but really I'd rather not. I never will drive a car that isn't mine. I did once, and ran into a tree. And that's made me superstitious, or broken my nerve."

"I'll take the risk," said I. "Besides, she's fully insured. And you really ought to try her. She's none too light in the steering, and you couldn't call the clutch sweet."

The lady laughed and refused.

"Is she for sale, Mr. Wrotham?"

"Oh, yes," said I. "She's for sale."

"But you don't want me to buy her?"

"To be honest, I don't. You see, I don't think she's your car."

"I think she's going to be."

I started the engine in silence.

"Where may I take you?" I said.

"Claridge's, please," said Miss Sword. "I take it she's ready for the road?"

"Oh, yes," said I. "She's ready to drive away."

"I don't want her for a week. Could you ship her for me to Bordeaux?"

"Certainly," said I.

"On Saturday next?"

"With pleasure."

"You see," said Miss Sword, "my sister, Brenda, and I want to start from Bordeaux. From there we'll go South to the mountains and then, by easy stages, along to the other coast. I've got the route here." She opened a smart red bag. "I wonder if you know it."

I took the typewritten slips.

BORDEAUX
48 *Marmande*
63 *Casteljaloux*
93 *St. Justin*
Etc.

"Yes," said I, "I know it. It's quite a good way."

"We thought of starting on Thursday —to-morrow week. From Bordeaux, I mean."

It was now the last week of July. South of Bordeaux it can be very hot in August. I wondered how the Roquefort would like the road from Marmande.

"I see," I said abstractedly. "Just you and your sister alone. Well, if you will arrange for her papers, I can get the car there."

"Thank you very much. Will you let me know what it costs?"

"We'll throw the freight in," said I. "It won't be very much."

"I don't see why you should. You know, I don't think she's dear."

"She isn't—in a way," said I. "She's no faults but those I've told you. I—I rather think she's for sale, because she got hot."

"Probably bad driving," said Miss Sword. "She's cool enough now."

This was undeniable. I began to wonder whether the car had improved.

Ten minutes later we came to the lady's hotel.

There she gave me a cocktail and a cheque for a thousand pounds.

When we parted she came to the pavement, to see me off.

"And thank you so much, Mr. Wrotham. Nobody could have been kinder—or more indiscreet. I'm sure you'd have choked off nine people out of ten."

"And the tenth won't hear me," I said.

"She's a beauty," said Miss Sword affectionately.

"'Handsome is as handsome does,'" said I. "I tell you, she's not your car."

The lady tilted her chin.

"I think you must permit me to know my own mind."

I took off my hat. . . .

By the time I had got back to Hay Street the Roquefort's thermometer had risen to 'DANGER—STEAM'.

George put in an appearance at a quarter past six.

When he had heard my story, he spoke of 'innocent girls' and 'ravening wolves'.

"Yes, I knew that was coming," said I. "My conscience is clear. The lady rushed upon her fate. I did my best to stop her, but *she would have the beastly car.*"

George raised his eyes to heaven.

"And you were at Oxford with her

brother. Did you tell her that the radiator was the finest lightning geyser you knew ? "

"She wouldn't believe me."

"And that the clutch——"

"No man," said I, "could have done more to put her off. Even after she'd paid me——"

"That was uncalled for," said George. "Have you got the cheque ? "

"Here," said I. "I had it made out to you."

"Quite right," said George, accepting the document. "You said you'd take six hundred, didn't you ? "

As soon as I could speak—

"Honour among thieves," said I. "Indorse it to me, and I'll give you a hundred back."

"Certainly not," said George. "I'll give you a cheque for eight hundred, and then I shall be down on the deal. If you had sold the coupé——"

"What d'you want for the coupé ? " said I suddenly.

"I told you," said George. "Seven hundred."

I tried to control my voice.

"Give me the coupé," said I, "and a cheque for three hundred pounds, and I'll go home."

"You're mad," said George coolly.

"I believe you," said I. "D'you know what you'd get for that coupé in Euston Road ? "

George took out a cheque-book.

"Make it two-fifty," he said. "Two hundred and fifty and the coupé. I've got to live."

In a shaking voice I told him to write the cheque.

As I was leaving, he pointed to a Rheims by the kerb.

"Now that's a good car," he said. "You wait till I've washed her face."

The car was a three-year-old. Provided her engine was good, she was worth about ninety pounds.

"I see," I said slowly. "And if I should hear of someone who's out of his mind . . ."

George Scarlett fingered his chin.

"To a friend of yours—four hundred."

I drove home dazedly.

* * * * *

Nine o'clock of next Thursday morning found me within the Lowland, passing through St. Justin on the way to Marmande.

The sky was cloudless and the day was beginning to be extremely hot.

At thirty-five miles an hour, with screen raised and windows open, the Lowland was pleasantly cool.

I was, of course, 'after' the Roquefort.

In a sense, it was a wild-goose chase ; but, even if the route had been altered, I knew the car. What I should do, when I found her, was not at all clear. The future, in fact, was depending upon Miss Agatha Sword.

I fully expected to find her between Bordeaux and Marmande. If, when we met, she was moving, I intended to turn round and follow, until she stopped. Once I had found her, it was only a matter of time. That sun . . .

I stopped at Casteljaloux and enjoyed a bottle of beer. Then I proceeded agreeably, proposing to enjoy another when I got to Marmande.

The proposal was vain.

When I had gone seven miles, I saw a large claret-coloured car by the side of the road. Its hood was up, and both sides of its bonnet were raised. Beside it stood a slight figure in a cream-coloured dress.

As I slowed to a standstill, Miss Sword gave a start of surprise.

"What ever are you doing here ? "

"Business," said I shortly. "What can I do ? "

She looked at me very hard.

"She does get hot," she said. "You were perfectly right."

"'The gipsy warned me,'" said I.

Miss Sword frowned.

"I think," she said, "I think that there must be a leak. I can't find one, but we filled her up at Marmande." I looked round for her sister. "Brenda's gone back to a stream about half a mile back."

I sighed.

"I'd better go and help her," I said. "This isn't a day for walking, with or without a load."

"You're very good," said Miss Sword.

I let in the clutch.

I liked Brenda very much.

She was fifteen and full of life as an egg is of meat. She did not care what she looked like and looked extremely nice. She had a keen sense of humour and an infectious laugh.

She laughed very much at my efforts to fill the can ; and, when, before my endeavours, the bank gave way, she nearly died.

We returned to Miss Sword and the Roquefort in a holiday humour.

I made two more journeys alone, before the radiator was full.



"She laughed very much at my efforts to fill the can; and, when, before my endeavours, the bank gave way, she nearly died."

"She's still very hot," said Miss Sword.

"I know," said I. "But, if you don't exceed twenty, she ought to do seven miles. Then we can lunch and let her get really cool."

"But what about your business?"

"I count this my business," I said importantly.

We moved to Casteljaloux at a funeral pace. When we arrived the Roquefort was boiling like hell.

"What *is* the matter with it?" said Miss Sword.

I shrugged my shoulders.

"Inherent vice," I said. "After lunch, as a matter of form, I'll drain the crank-case and have a look at the pump. What I don't understand is how you got as far as you did. You must have left Bordeaux very early."

Brenda began to shake with laughter.

"We started yesterday," said Miss Sword. "But we—we got held up on the road, so we slept at Marmande."

Not daring to trust my voice, I made my way into the inn. . . .

Physically, I did not enjoy that afternoon.

It was thirty miles to St. Justin, and we did it in seven hours. Of course the great heat was against us, but, after the first six miles, the Roquefort began to seethe.

"Don't take any notice," said I. "Put her along at fifty, and swear she's cool."

"You ought to be ashamed," said Miss Sword. "A beautiful car like this. I don't believe she's ever been understood."

Subduing a desire to scream, I berthed the Lowland, opened the Roquefort's bonnet and then lay down in the grass.

"I—I didn't mean to be rude," said Miss Sword suddenly.

"You weren't," said I, sitting up.

"I was rather short: but you mustn't abuse the car."

"I'll—I'll try not to," I said.

Miss Sword descended and took her seat by my side.

"You're really very kind to us," she said: "but I can't let your business suffer because of——"

"Look here," said I. "As soon as you're tired of me, please tell me to go. In so many words. I want to see this thing through, and my business can wait."

"Do you always give 'service' like this?"

"Not always," said I. "Not every car requires it."

There was a little silence.

The shade was grateful, and my companion's profile was a sight for the gods.

I watched her lace her fingers about a slim knee.

"Didn't you row for Oxford?" she said.

"Yes," said I. "Rather a long time ago."

"Twelve years," said Miss Sword. "My brother remembers you well."

I dared not return the compliment. Sword had been junior to me. I remembered his ways dimly: but I could not remember his face.

"That's right," I said. "He used to hunt with the Bicester and ride very straight."

The girl nodded.

"Usedn't you to live in Yorkshire?"

"I do still," said I, "except when I'm up in Town."

Miss Sword regarded me straitly, finger to lip.

"I don't think you can take your—your profession very seriously," she said.

With a shock I remembered that I was George Scarlett's partner and a 'motor-car man'.

"I—I'm afraid George has the brains," I said lamely. "He's quick as a lizard. I've seen him make four hundred and fifty in one afternoon."

"You must be millionaires," said Miss Sword.

"We don't always do that. The same day I dropped fourteen hundred."

My companion took a deep breath.

"I'm beginning to see," she said, "why so much of your time is your own. What are you doing with the Lowland?"

"She's for sale," I said evasively. "When we can't sell a car in London, we—we trot her out."

"I shouldn't have thought Marmande was a very good market."

"You never know," I said darkly.

Miss Sword returned to the Roquefort.

"She's quieter now," she said. "D'you think it's safe to take the cap off?"

I stood up and shaded my eyes.

Some willows argued a streamlet four fields away.

I took off my coat, laid it down and picked up the can.

"There's no immediate hurry," I said. "I don't expect I'll be back under half an hour."

A shriek of laughter from the Roquefort preceded Brenda herself.

"I'll come with you," she said. "I'd like to."

"It looks a hot walk," said I. "And supposing I don't fall in."

"I'll chance that," said Brenda, gurgling.

It was an extremely hot walk. It was also the first of many. When I was not walking, I was getting into or out of the Lowland or opening the doors of the furnace which the engine of the Roquefort became. In between these exercises, I proved that the radiator functioned and took down the water-pump—these things against all reason, but because, unless I had done them, I should have had no peace. One cannot accept witchcraft without a fight.

We had a late tea by the way and trickled into St. Justin at nine o'clock.

As I opened the door of the Roquefort—

"You can't stay here," said I. "If you don't believe me, come and have a look at the inn."

"But what can we do?" said Miss Sword.

"Take the Lowland," said I, "and drive on to Mont-de-Marsan. That's fifteen miles. I'll look after the Roquefort. If you're not back by midday to-morrow, where shall I send your big stuff?"

"I won't hear of such a thing. We can lock her switch and her bonnet and garage her here. Then, if you'll take us on to Mont-de-Marsan . . ."

We had a most excellent dinner at half-past nine.

When Brenda retired for the night, I glanced at my watch.

"Would you like to dance?" I said. "We're an hour and a half from Biarritz, and they don't get up from table till half-past twelve."

My lady sprang to her feet.

"I'd love it," she said. "But aren't you most awfully tired?"

"The night air's revived me," said I, and got to my feet. "Will you be ready to start in half an hour?"

"You're very good to me," said Agatha Sword.

* * * * *

The first person I saw in the casino was Jonathan Stroud. We met in the cloak-room. To my great relief he said he was going to bed.

Jonathan and Cicely Stroud live next to me in Yorkshire and are among my best friends. But I did not want Agatha to meet them. They knew very well I was not in the motor-car trade. What was far worse, they knew all about the Roquefort.

We stood in the hall, talking, whilst I watched the ladies' cloakroom with my heart in my mouth.

If Agatha came out first, the game was up. I should have to introduce Jonathan: the delay would give Cicely time to appear on the scene—and Cicely, desperate chatter-box, would certainly give me away. Even if Cicely came first . . .

"Tell me," said Jonathan suddenly. "How's the steam heat?"

He was referring to the Roquefort.

"I've sold her," said I shortly. "How long are you——"

"You fraudulent blackguard," said Jonathan. "You wicked——"

"Nonsense," said I. "The body alone ——"

Cicely appeared and nearly put her arms round my neck.

"He's sold the blast furnace," said Jonathan. "Robbed some widow an' orphan——"

"Good for you," said Cicely. "How did you bring it off?"

She asked question after question, and I thought they would never go.

As they passed out of the doors, Agatha reappeared.

"I'm afraid I've been ages," she said.

"Not at all," said I, wiping the sweat from my face.

We had a great night, and, ere we got back to Mont-de-Marsan, the dawn was up.

Soon after midday on Friday we left St. Justin for Pau.

We got there at half-past ten—fifty-five miles in ten hours.

Of course the heat was against us—I never remember such a day. Even the Lowland got warm. As for the Roquefort . . .

Agatha was most patient.

That I was patient was nothing. It was my job.

I had begged her to take the Lowland and give me the Roquefort back. I had gone to Biarritz solely to show her what the Lowland could do. But she would not.

Hard as I strove to reverse it, her decision was what I desired. The Roquefort was my excuse for going where Agatha went. When she was through with the Roquefort—well, that was where I got off. I did not want to get off.

So, as I have said, that I was patient was nothing.

I fetched and carried water, I opened and closed the bonnet, I dismantled the carburettors, and I swore that at Pau I would have the engine down.

Agatha watched and listened and Brenda laughed.

We lunched in a grove of chestnuts, and had tea in a blowing meadow beneath an oak.

After tea we went for a walk.

As we returned to the Roquefort, Agatha touched my arm.

"Isn't she a picture?" she said.

I pushed back my hat. Such loyalty was out of my ken.

"Oh, she looks all right," I said faintly. "Tell me when you want your cheque back?"

"She's capricious," said Agatha stoutly. "Many cars are. Besides, think of all she's been through."

"She's been through a good deal of water. I can't think of anything else."

"Nonsense," said Agatha. "This heat is abnormal."

"If you can bear it," said I, "if ever we get to Pau, I would like the engine down. Meanwhile there'll be the Lowland to run you around."

"I'd like to get her right," said Agatha. "All the same, it's the way to see the country—jogging along like this. Just look at the sun on those hills."

With an effort I controlled my voice.

"You're very philosophical," I said. "Long before now most people would have issued a writ."

Agatha took off her hat and gave her dark hair to the breeze.

"What worries me," she said, "is your business. What will Mr. Scarlett say? Perhaps you'll be able to sell the Lowland at Pau."

I swallowed before replying.

The bare thought of parting with the Lowland was disconcerting. The Lowland was our tender, our mainstay, our present help. Without the Lowland, dalliance with the Roquefort would become one long round of torment. Sisyphus and two Danaids, using a French highway . . .

At length—

"Quite likely," I said.

"How much are you asking?" said Agatha.

"Six hundred pounds," said I.

"She knows how to move," said my lady. "I'll speak to that."

"I've tried to make you take her," said I.

"Don't be silly. I'm more than content. When we've located the trouble . . . By the way, what does Brenda call you?"

"'Bill'," said I. "It's simpler than 'Mr. Wrotham'. I think she's quite right."

Agatha regarded the heaven.

"Shall we take the plunge?" she said.

"Yes, please, Agatha," said I.

"Very well, Bill."

I adjusted the Roquefort's bonnet with meticulous care.

As I did so, Brenda appeared. Her approach was embarrassed by a goat which she held by one horn. She looked like a rosy nymph on the way to have dinner with Pan.

Agatha let out a cry.

"Brenda darling, don't say you've bought this—this mascot."

"I agree," said I. "Supposing after a mile it begins to get hot."

"Oh, no," said Brenda, bubbling. "I haven't bought him. He's lost. We must try to find where he lives. He doesn't smell much," she added.

Here the goat broke away, came and gazed up into my face, turned away, as though disappointed, and seized the oilskin tobacco-pouch which I had laid on the step.

It seemed absurd not to try and get it back. . . .

After an unpleasant scene, I got half of it back.

After inspecting my share, I offered it back to the goat.

"Oh, you'll p-p-poison him," wailed Agatha.

Brenda was incapable of speech.

As I threw the pouch over the hedge, the goat rose upon its hind legs and took hold of my tie. . . .

"D-don't d-drive him away," sobbed Brenda. "I tell you, he's l-lost."

I explained that in France goats were left to wander and raven as much as they pleased. I said that I personally deplored the practice. I added that, while I had nothing against goats as a class, I had formed a, perhaps unaccountable, dislike for this particular goat which would go into no words which were not either blasphemous or obscene.

With that, I picked up a stone. . . .

With a long, malignant look, the goat sprang up a bank and disappeared in a wood. I had, I suppose, spoiled its game.

When the sisters were sufficiently recovered, we went on our way.

At seven I took the Lowland and ran

into Pau. There I engaged the rooms and ordered a stately supper for eleven o'clock. Then I returned to the Roquefort. While I had been gone she had covered another ten miles.

"I think she's improving," said Agatha. "She doesn't get so hot as she did."

I said that I thought this was due to the cool of the day.

"Not altogether," said my lady. "You wait till the next hill we come to."

I waited till the next hill.

There we all waited for nearly three-quarters of an hour.

"Of course," said Agatha, "this is an exceptional hill."

This was quite true. All the same . . .

* * * * *

The next four days went by at headlong speed.

The weather was cooler, the hotel was comfortable, and the Lowland ran like a train.

Each day we drove into the mountains and lunched by the side of the road.

Agatha was perfectly charming, and the third day Brenda kissed me when I asked her to drive us home.

Meanwhile the Roquefort's engine was taken down. It was found to be mechanically perfect in every way. It was then put together again, and by Tuesday night the car was once more ready to take the road.

Agatha was anxious to go by the Col de Fer—a very handsome and justly famous way. The top of the pass is about six thousand feet up: the gradients are extremely severe: so are the bends—a long car has to reverse continually. If the weather is at all hot . . .

I felt bound to point out that, unless the Roquefort had changed, our chances of reaching the top within twenty-four hours were so thin as to be imperceptible.

"We can but try," said Agatha. "Even if we do have to rest her, it's a perfectly lovely way. And I'd like to stay at Lally, at the foot of the pass."

"I'd love it," said Brenda. "D'you think there's a tennis-court?"

"If you're in earnest," said I, "I'll take you rooms for a month. You won't want to stay longer than that. The season ends the first of September."

"Don't be silly," said Agatha. "We shall wake up one morning to find that she's overcooled. Have you heard from Mr. Scarlett?"

"No," said I. "When he wants me, he'll drop me a line."

"But, Bill," said Brenda, "how does he know where you are?"

"I have to report," I said boldly. "Report twice a week."

Agatha sighed.

"I do wish," she said, "I do wish you could sell the Lowland. Then, at least, all this 'service' you're giving us wouldn't be a dead loss."

"That's nothing," said I. "We want you to be satisfied."

"Isn't he sweet?" said Brenda.

Agatha took a deep breath.

"You're marvellous to your clients," she said. "Of course I shall recommend you to everyone. But I can't see how you make any money."

"We—we're not out for money," said I. "What we want is to—to keep our clients. You see, what I mean is this. If we satisfy you, next time you want a car you come back."

"But I might want a new one," said Agatha.

"That doesn't matter," said I. "We'd be very happy to advise you. We don't charge for advice."

"Don't you?" said Agatha.

"Not our clients," I said.

"Then what's the good of keeping them?" said Brenda.

I rose to my feet.

"My dear," I said, "you don't understand business. I'm not very good at it, either. But George has got it down to a fine art. If he were here, he'd be the first to tell me to see you through."

Agatha opened her eyes.

"But doesn't he know? I thought you reported twice a week."

"He's in Scotland," I said swiftly. "Hasn't had my letters yet."

"So all this time he thinks you're selling the Lowland?"

"Exhibiting her," I corrected. "But we hadn't really much hope."

"But, my dear, we use her. We use her from morning to night. Who ever would dream she was for sale?"

"No one," said I. "That's the clever part of it. If I gave out I wanted to sell her, no one would touch her with the end of a ten-foot pole. As long as I don't, someone will fall for her one day and come and start in to bribe me to let her go."

"I see," said Agatha thoughtfully.

"Then you recommend staying at Lally to-morrow night?"

"It's twenty-five miles," said I. "If we get off early, we ought to be in by dark."

"Perhaps she's cured," said Agatha. "Then you'll be free."

"I hope she isn't," said Brenda gallantly.

I took my hat and went off to the garage to see.



"Brenda's approach was embarrassed by a goat which she held by one horn."

The Roquefort was not cured.

Four mechanics were standing about her, watching her seethe.

"She heats herself," said the foreman, as I came up.

"Well done," said I acidly. "Now tell me why."

He spread out his hands.

"Who shall say?" he replied. "There are cars like this. I think it is an act of God."

"It's a car of France," said I shortly.

"Without doubt," said the foreman proudly. "She is very beautiful."

"With English coachwork," said I maliciously.

Then I paid the bill and drove slowly away.

* * * * *

We were fifteen miles from Lally, and we had just finished lunch.

The Roquefort, with the Lowland behind her, was standing by the side of the way. The former's bonnet was open, and I was gauging the oil—as a matter of form. Agatha was screwing on the cap of the radiator, and Brenda was bestowing the

can. In a word, the ritual precedent to a start was almost complete.

A car, coming from Lally, drew slowly abreast, and the pleasant American driving inquired if we needed help.

We smiled and said "No, thank you". That also was part of our ritual: we had already observed it about two hundred times.

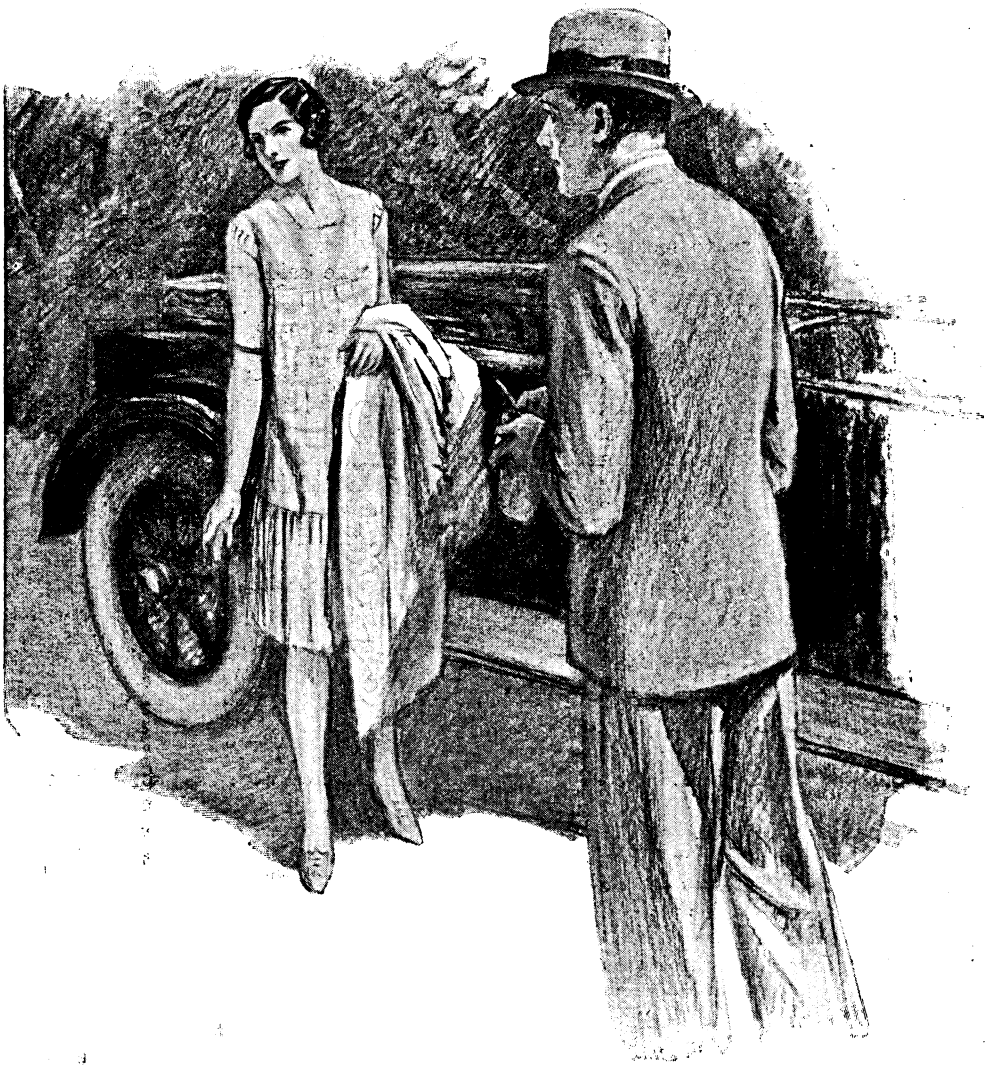
"What's the matter?" said I.

"Oh, nothing much," said the other. "If I take a corner too sharp, the steering breaks. But I've plenty of string."

He took off his hat to the girls and let in his clutch.

I returned to the Roquefort.

When I looked round again, the stranger



"Not at all," said the stranger. "I take it I'm right for Pau."

"You can't miss it," said I. "Fifteen miles, and turn to the right at Mass."

"Hope I may get there," said he, with a glance at his car.

This was an old two-seater of no known make.

was still abreast. He seemed to be looking at something, and I followed his gaze.

He was looking at the Lowland—with a steady, *covetous* leer.

As in a dream, I watched the man lick his lips.

Then he drew in his breath.

"But what a car," he said quietly.

I looked at Agatha, standing out of his sight.

Her great eyes aglow with excitement, she was making me frantic signs to go in and win.

All I could see of Brenda was shaking with mirth.

"But what a car," purred the stranger. "Look at that line."

"She—she's all right," I stammered.

"'All right'?" said the stranger. He crawled to the side of the road and got out of his car. "Talk about Traveller's Joy." He stepped in front of the Lowland and let out a squeal. "Holy snakes! It's a Lowland."

As in a dream, I watched him stamping around.

Presently he came up to me and smote me upon the back.

"I guess you'll be thinking my manners are coming on, but a friend of mine in Boston is Lowland mad. For two years now he's been proving there's only one car. An' I've come to sit at his feet. But he doesn't keep a body like this. If he could see this, he'd grow a permanent squint."

I swallowed before replying.

"They—they're quite good cars," I said. "Don't—don't let you down."

Agatha stepped to my side.

"There's nothing like them," she said. "They're guaranteed to do eighty, but this one will do eighty-five."

The American settled his glasses. These were large and tinted. In view of the brilliant sunshine, I rather envied him them.

"She's a daisy," he said. "Just look at that line."

I pulled myself together.

"She's a good stamp of car," I said. "I don't know how she'll show in the mountains, but so far I've no complaints."

Agatha laid a hand on my arm.

"Bill, you're forgetting. Don't you remember on Sunday, when we went by the Col d'Erreur?" She turned to the stranger. "I don't know whether you know the Col d'Erreur?"

The other glanced at his car.

"Backwards," he said shortly. "I had to go up in reverse."

"We did it in third," said my lady. "Three up, too: and moving. But she never got hot."

"I believe you," said the other. "I believe you. There's only one car."

He started to walk about her, as a zealot about a statue, to view her from every point.

As he was mounting the bank, I spoke in Agatha's ear.

"Don't rush it," I breathed. "For heaven's sake don't rush it. You'll—you'll put him off."

"My dear, you're a hopeless salesman," she murmured back. "You must ask nine hundred and let him have it for eight."

"May I get inside?" said the stranger. "I guess I'm abusing your kindness, but I've seen half a million autos, and this is my car."

"Er, certainly," said I. "Certainly. Of course it's special coachwork. They—they come out pretty expensive, when——"

"Not for what they are," said Agatha.

The stranger leaned back on the seat.

"Gosh," he said, "but here's comfort. I'd like to pension the fellow that made these springs." He put out the clutch. "And what a movement. Silk upon rubber, and as firm as a ten-ton crane."

"You—you must get one like her," I said. "I must say she's very useful. I'm—I'm getting quite attached to her myself."

There was a little silence.

Stepping out of the stranger's vision, Agatha deplored and exhorted with eyes and hands.

I winked back knowingly.

In the background, Brenda was endeavouring to stifle a paroxysm of mirth.

An idea came to me suddenly.

"Are you going to England," I said, "by any chance?"

"Yep. In the fall."

I could have crowed. He could have the Lowland in October and pay what he pleased.

"Well, I know a fellow," said I, "who's got a Lowland for sale, the spit of this. I'll drop him a line if you like, and he'll save her up. Scarlett, his name is, of Hay Street, in London Town."

Agatha and Brenda were staring, as if I was out of my mind.

I smiled back confidently.

Then Agatha stepped to the window and dashed my dream.

"But you want one now, don't you?"

The stranger bowed.

"Madam," said he, "I want what I want when I want it—and that's the truth. If this pretty toy was for sale . . ."

He threw up his eyes and sighed and got out of the car.

As he did so—

"*Go on*," breathed Agatha. "My dear,

I implore you—*go on*. Say you might consider an offer. Say——"

"But he won't have the money," I protested. "I can't let him——"

The stranger reappeared.

"I've been presooming," he said. "You've been out of measure civil, and, much as I'd like to, I can't presoome any more. But if you'd lived to own a Lowland and done a thousand miles in that mother's mistake—well, I guess I'd forgive you for coveting your ideal."

"That's all right," I said warmly. "It's been a great pleasure to——"

"Wait a moment," said Agatha. "When you say 'Much as you'd like to', what do you mean?"

The American took a deep breath.

"I guess you can't eat me," he said, and tilted his hat. "That car's my car. I knew it the moment I saw her. There may be other Lowlands, but I want my Lowland now. The trouble is you're in possession." He waited there for a moment and moistened his lips. "I don't know who loves her the most: but I love her four thousand dollars, and I'll come with a banker's draft in two days' time."

Eight hundred pounds.

I frowned.

"Where are you staying?" I said. "It's—it's rather sudden, this. I mean, she's rather useful. But give me twenty-four hours, and——"

"Don't you think we could do it?" said Agatha, laying a hand on my arm. "After all, we've got the Roquefort, and, as Mr.—Mr.——"

"S. J. Ellis," said the stranger, bowing again.

"As Mr. Ellis likes her so much . . ."

"But she's on a permit," I cried. "She's got to go back to England. I can sell her in England, but——"

"But he's going to England," said Agatha.

"That's so," said Mr. Ellis. "I'm doo to stay in Scotland in six weeks' time."

There was another silence.

I employed it in wondering how I should explain to the sisters why I had sought to sell in France a car which must go back to England within the year.

"Will you make it nine hundred?" said Agatha suddenly. "Four thousand five hundred dollars, or nine hundred pounds."

Mr. Ellis fingered his chin.

I was past speaking.

Mr. Ellis threw up his head.

"I'll see you," he said. "Nine hundred. Would you be at Lally on Friday at twelve o'clock?"

"Yes," said Agatha. "At the Continental Hotel."

"Then it's a deal?"

Agatha did not answer, and, when I looked up, I found they were looking at me.

"Very well," I said faintly.

"Hooroosh!" screamed Mr. Ellis, and flung up his hat.

His explosion of joy was most depressing. Amid other speculation, I wondered what he would say, when he saw from her papers that the value I had set upon the Lowland was two hundred and fifty pounds. I also wondered what Agatha would say if, out of the proceeds of the theft, I purchased another car.

She and Brenda were plainly as pleased as Punch and abetted the stranger's delirium with undisguised glee. I smiled a good deal, said 'Not at all' several times, and pictured us carrying pails up the Col de Fer. I decided to try and purchase a milkman's yoke. Then I subtracted two hundred and fifty from nine hundred and felt rather faint.

There was only one thing to be done. As soon as the money had passed, we must disappear. The moment he looked at the papers, Mr. Ellis was sure to return. Of course he had no sort of case. Still, two hundred and sixty per cent. I think even George . . . Oh, undoubtedly we must disappear. The moment the money had —— It occurred to me with a shock that, hampered by the Roquefort, no man could disappear. Deprived of her tender, she would not do thirty miles a day. As for using the Col de Fer . . .

Mr. Ellis shook hands all round and got into his car.

"Till Friday, friends," he cried, with his eyes devouring the Lowland and a grin of infatuate contentment absorbing his face.

"So long," I said gaily. "So long."

We watched him pass out of sight.

Agatha turned to me twittering.

"Isn't it wonderful?" she said.

"Marvellous," said I faintly.

She took my arm and started to stroll down the road.

"But you ought to have asked a thousand. I'm sure he'd have come right in. Mr. Scarlett——"

"I don't think so," said I. "He could buy a new one for——"

"Business is business," said Agatha. "Never mind. I'm so pleased."

I put a hand to my head.

"It's very sweet of you," said I. "And of course it's all your doing. You put the deal through."

"I know. My dear, you're quite hopeless. Mr. Scarlett would have asked a thousand, and got it, too. You were all right at first. Sticky isn't the word. But you kept it up far too long. When you said you couldn't sell out of England, I nearly died. Anyone would have thought that nothing would induce you to sell. Never mind. It gave me my chance. Now I don't feel quite so guilty about taking up all your time. You must cable to Mr. Scarlett and give him your news."

"Very well," said I obediently.

* * * * *

It was Thursday evening, and Brenda had gone to bed.

Agatha and I were walking in the curtilage of Lally's casino, listening to the roar of falling water in the valley below. Its curtilage was as wealthy as the casino was poor: the mountains and the forests and the starlight and the sweet smell of hay made up a fabulous world.

The day had not been wasted. That afternoon we had reconnoitred the pass. The Lowland had taken us up in just under an hour. On the way back I selected the various places at which a big car could possibly be berthed for the night. This, mechanically. The Roquefort would never use them. She should have four hours in which to attain the summit. And, when we had wasted four hours, we would leave by some other road. When you are escaping from Justice . . .

"Did you send the cable?" said Agatha.

"No," said I. "I didn't. I'm going to write."

"'Going to'?"

"Well," said I, "supposing he doesn't turn up?"

"Of course he'll turn up. D'you think we could possibly say that we meant a thousand?"

"No," I said shakily. "I don't. As it is . . ."

I hesitated.

"What?" said Agatha.

"I wish," said I, "you wouldn't attempt the pass. The Roquefort'll never do it under a week."

"One full day," said Agatha stoutly.

"I'll take your figure," said I. "Call it one day. You won't call it that by sundown, but let that pass. One day. That means that to-morrow we'll have to leave her out and make our way back to Lally to spend the night."

Agatha shook her fair head.

"The thing to do is to wait till the weather's more cool. Then we'll get up at dawn one morning and do the trick. I rather like Lally," she added. "I shouldn't mind a week here at all. But you mustn't let us keep you. Now that you've sold the Lowland——"

"We can't stay here," said I. "Not after noon to-morrow. When Ellis sees her papers, the man'll go out of his mind."

"For heaven's sake, why?"

"Because he's been robbed," said I. "Done down, despoiled, eaten. In her papers that car is valued at two hundred and fifty pounds. My valuation, mark you. When he sees that, what d'you think Ellis will do?"

"Oh, my dear," said Agatha, finger to lip.

"Exactly," said I. "He'll come back. I don't say he's got a good case, but I don't think that'll stop him. It wouldn't stop me. Before he's through, they'll have heard him talking in Spain. I don't care for myself, but *you're* in it. You're in it up to the neck. He offered more than three times her value, *and you put him up.*"

"Oh, Bill," said Agatha faintly.

"I think we'd better tell him," said I. "It won't be pleasant, but you can go for a walk."

"If you do, he won't give six hundred. He'll look you up and down and offer you four."

"So much the better," said I. "Then the deal will be off."

"But——"

"My dear," said I, "I don't care. I—I don't want to sell. Later, perhaps; but not now. It—it isn't convenient."

Agatha stared.

"But Mr. Scarlett——"

"Oh, hang Mr. Scarlett," said I. "This is my show. I won't sell the Lowland. And if Ellis is mad—if, knowing her value, he still wants to buy at nine hundred, he can drive me down to Pau and I'll purchase another car."

"But, I thought——"

"Don't thwart me," said I. "I can't bear it. I've undergone a great strain. Several great strains. Without the Lowland

we should never have got to Pau. The Roquefort cumbers the earth. It's not a car. It's a tank—a septic tank. To set out alone with that central-heating circus—why, even Ellis wouldn't do it. The very idea's fantastic. I've never understood yet how you got to Marmande. With the Lowland—yes. You've a car to fetch and carry and flick you home, if you're stuck. Look at St. Justin. But without a tender . . . Agatha dear, you must see . . ."

Agatha stared straight ahead.

"Yes, I see now," she said quietly. "I can't think how I was so simple. So that's why you wouldn't offer the Lowland. That's why, when you got your chance, you tried to choke Ellis off." There was a



"'Hooroosh!' screamed Mr. Ellis, and flung up his hat."

deadly silence. "And that's why, if he will have her, you'll spend Mr. Scarlett's money in buying another car. I'm sorry, my dear, but that's a sort of 'service' I can't accept."

"It's not a sort that I offer," said I firmly. "I'm only a friend of George Scarlett's. He had to go down to Surrey, and I—I held the fort for an afternoon. It happened that the Roquefort was mine. When I sold her to you, I dropped fourteen hundred pounds. But what worried me was that I knew that she'd let you down. So I bought the Lowland from George and made for Marmande. I—I thought you'd be glad to exchange after fifty miles. When I put the brute away at St. Justin, I never imagined you'd want to see her again. And I really took you to Biarritz to show you what the Lowland could do. When you still loved the Roquefort next day, I threw in my hand."

Agatha stood very still.

"I'm afraid," she said, "I have a confession to make. Cicely Stroud and I are very old friends. I found her in the cloakroom at Biarritz. And, when she heard you were with me, I—I learned quite a lot. Of course I was pretty certain, but she cleared it up."

I stared at her open-mouthed.

Then I caught her white wrists.

"Then you knew," I cried. "Then you've known. You've known all along."

"What?" said Agatha.

"What sort of 'service' it was I was offering you."

"I—I suppose so."

I put my arms about her and drew her close.

"Agatha, sweetheart, I offer it always," I said.

With a little laugh she set her arms round my neck.

* * * * *

When at last I remembered Mr. Ellis, Agatha took my face in her hands.

"He was with you at Oxford," she said. "'He used to hunt with the Bicester and ride very straight.' He was also quite a good actor. I think he is still."

"It runs in the family," said I.

APRIL.

APRIL'S a maid with heart astir,
Frolicking by;
Madly merry—then deep in gloom,
Knowing not why.

Borne on the breeze, her skirts of green
Flutter and whirl;
Laughing aloud she dances along,
Adorable girl!

Suddenly sad—in the blue-bell eyes
Sparkles a tear;
That radiant petal, her cheek, grows pale,
Mantled with fear.

Weeping and shivering, icily cold,
Cowering low;
Till weary of sobbing she smiles again,
Forgetting her woe.

And, snaring our hearts along the years,
A single strand
Of her yellow-gold hair, is pulling us home
From many a land.

E. KING.

The Man Who Brought About War

By W. TOWNEND

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES CROMBIE

MARGAY was his name, Simon Abner Margay, and he sold newspapers and tobacco and sweets in a little shop in a London side-street and he told me a story that you will not believe.

He was when I first met him a man of about fifty-seven, small in stature, not over robust in build, narrow in the chest, and fragile generally. His face was thin and colourless. His hair, once apparently auburn, was now a rusty grey. In his faded blue eyes that peered at one short-sightedly through large horn-rimmed spectacles there was always a furtive, anxious expression that seemed the outcome of some deep-rooted fear. But his smile was friendly and his manner, once his reticence had been overcome, genial.

In the early days of our acquaintance whenever I had occasion to enter his shop Mr. Margay would greet me with a grave inclination of his head, and having served me with whatever I had come to buy would say good-morning or good-evening, as the case might be, and straightway resume his reading, as though signifying that the transaction was at an end.

After a few weeks, however, he began to regard me as a regular customer and therefore a friend, and would so far unbend from his aloofness as to remark on the weather or the chief events of the day. But that was all, and for some time our intimacy was limited to these few words.

And then one evening, when I was idly turning over the pages of a magazine, Mr. Margay, who was seated behind the counter reading a book, exclaimed loudly:

"The man's no more than a fool!"

Although I knew that he had been talking to himself I said:

"Did you mean me, Mr. Margay?"

He jumped to his feet, his pale face pink, and stared at me across the heaped-up piles of magazines and weekly papers with round and horrified eyes.

"You don't really think I could be guilty of so gross a rudeness, I trust. I was commenting aloud on something I chanced to see in a book I was reading. As a matter of fact, sir, I did not know there was anyone in the shop."

"And the book?" I asked.

"A novel which, I find, deals extensively with the War. I shall have to send it back to the library."

"Aren't you interested in the War, then?"

The faded blue eyes blinked. The thin right hand plucked at the narrow chin.

"Yes," said Mr. Margay presently. "I *am* interested. Intensely. But I have never yet read a book on the War and I never shall read one." He shivered. "The War's too terrible," he said. "Too recent."

For a time neither of us spoke. And then I said:

"Mr. Margay, have you ever considered what the ordinary man would feel if he

were responsible for bringing that War about ? "

" Have I ever considered ! " said Mr. Margay with a catch in his voice. " Have I ever considered anything else ! "

I looked at him in astonishment.

The little bell over the shop door clinked and Mr. Margay's nephew, a plump, earnest young man, entered.

" George," said Mr. Margay, " take charge, will you, please." He turned to me and spoke in a husky undertone : " Are you in any great hurry, sir ? "

" No," I said. " Why ? "

" I'd take it as a favour if you'd step inside for ten minutes or so. There's something I want to tell you."

He lifted the flap of the counter and I passed through the door with the lace-curtained window in the upper half into a little sitting-room where there was a table laid for tea, and a fire burning in an open grate, and a canary in a cage, and shelves packed with books.

" Well, Mr. Margay," I said, " what is it ? "

" Why did you ask if I had ever considered what a man would feel if he were responsible for bringing about the War ? What was your motive ? "

" No motive at all," I said, puzzled by his earnestness. " You told me you couldn't read War books, that was all."

" Would you like me to tell you the reason ? " said Mr. Margay. " The real reason ! "

" Yes," I said. " I would."

Mr. Margay glanced quickly first to the right, then to the left, almost as though afraid that some third person had crept into the little room to listen.

" Would you believe me if I said I was the man responsible for bringing about the War ? " he said.

All I could say was :

" You, Mr. Margay ! "

" Me ! It was through me, sir, that the great War of nineteen-fourteen to nineteen-nineteen was fought. Wait, please ! I'm not attempting to say there wasn't enmity between the nations. There was. There always is. But if enmity were the only reason for war we'd be fighting at this minute." He looked at the clock on the mantelpiece. " Fighting at half-past five this afternoon. All over the world. Europe, Asia, America, Africa, and I dare say Australia, as well. I have a cousin in Melbourne whom I dislike. And my brother Tom's boy, now an American citizen and resident in New York, borrowed money from me twenty-five years ago and never repaid his debt. Yes, sir, if enmity were a cause of war, we'd be fighting this afternoon. But I repeat enmity was not the cause of the Great War. The actual cause was myself, Simon Abner Margay."

He broke off and blinked at me owlishly through his glasses.

" Possibly you might be interested to hear," he said.

He waved his hand toward one of the two armchairs that stood on either side of the hearthrug, and dropped into the other limply.

For some time neither of us said a word. And then, with a little preliminary cough, Mr. Margay began his story.

" I had in the spring of nineteen hundred and fourteen a customer called Richter, a German and a tailor. In the month of April I did him a favour. One of my other customers at that time was a wine merchant —possibly you may know his establishment in the High Street—who had on his hands a stock of Rhine wine that he wished to dispose of, there being little or no demand for it in the locality. Richter wanted a case. Unhappily for himself, he and the wine merchant were on bad terms, having quarrelled over the cut of a suit he had made for the wine merchant's younger son, Claude. As I heard both sides of the matter, I was unable to form any definite opinion which of the two was in the right.

" Anyway, leaving non-essentials aside, Richter called in to see me and ordered a box of Habana cigars. Then he asked me if I would mind purchasing a case of Rhine wine from the said wine merchant and passing it on to him. I said I would be only too pleased and did as I was requested. That evening, under cover of darkness, and most unfortunately unobserved, I carried the case of Rhine wine around to Richter's shop. Richter was most grateful and promised me a cheque next day without fail. I assured him there was not the least hurry and we parted on the best of terms. Apparently Richter, however, took me at my word, for he made no effort to pay back what he owed.

" Weeks went by and I began to feel, justifiably, I consider, annoyed. Look at it which way you like, Richter had treated me shabbily. I decided to take action.

" And so once again I called on him. What did I want ? he asked. I confess that

I lost my temper. I rapped on the counter with the head of my umbrella. 'Mr. Richter,' I said, 'I want my money!'

"He gazed at me with a look of insolence. 'Why, the money you owe me! The money you owe me for the case of Rhine wine and the cigars!' Richter frowned at me. 'A case of Rhine wine and cigars!' he said.



"'Would you believe me if I said I was the man responsible for bringing about the War?' Mr. Margay said."

I can describe it in no other way. Insolence. 'What money?' he said. I can see him now lighting a cigar—one of my Habanas—and puffing out a cloud of smoke. 'What money?' he said. 'What money!' said I. 'Nonsense. I've had no wine or cigars from you! You've made a mistake!'

"For a moment my heart stood still. I could only lean on the counter and stare at him and wonder within myself how any

man, even a German tailor and a bad one at that, could be so lacking in self-respect as to lie deliberately. 'Mr. Richter,' I said, 'I purchased a case of Rhine wine for you and brought it to you in person more than six weeks ago, and you have not yet paid me!' He snapped his fingers rudely. 'You lie!' he said. 'I have had no wine from you. Get out of my shop!'

"Though it shames me to have to acknowledge it now, I confess I saw red. I raised my umbrella and hit him. He staggered back against the shelves at the back of the counter and then sprang at me. Literally, he sprang. Like a tiger. Before I could put myself in a posture of defence Richter had vaulted the counter and seized me about the neck with both his hands. He shook me till the tears came to my eyes. He threw me against a tall pier-glass which, I am glad to say, broke, and for which he found fresh cause for anger. It was my fault, he said. He caught hold of me by one ear and dragged me out through the door into the street, where by now no inconsiderable crowd had collected. There he turned me about so swiftly that I was unable to resist, and indeed was in no fit state to do so, even had I wished, and placing the flat of his foot against the lower portion of my back, propelled me with all his force away from him. I fell on my face. When I arose I was covered with mud. And although my assailant was a German, a man much bigger than myself, and a thief to wit, the spectators laughed at me.

"Labouring under the injustice, I took the law into my own hands. Wrongly, I admit.

"Workmen had been excavating a deep trench in the roadway. But whether on account of the drains or the water supply or the gas or electricity I did not pause to inquire. It was sufficient for my purpose that there were missiles within reach. I stooped, caught up a stone, and hurled it. Richter stood in his doorway, a broad smile on his face, exclaiming in pseudo-consternation. The stone crashed through one of his plate-glass windows and his smile vanished in consternation that was no longer pseudo.

"From the other side of the street a policeman had seen me in the act of throwing the stone. Richter raised an outcry. For no reason I had entered his shop and assaulted him. My broken umbrella bore witness to the truth of his statement. There was the broken pier-glass as well. The broken window. The evidence of the policeman's own eyes. The evidence of Frau Richter, who wept copiously. I was arrested and taken to the nearest police station. Next morning I duly appeared in the police court before the magistrate.

"Such perjury as Richter's I could not have believed possible on mere hearsay. He stated on oath that he neither owed me money nor had he ordered from me nor received from me either wine or cigars. How could I prove that he had? The transaction had been verbal. The upshot of the matter was that I went to prison for one month for an unprovoked assault on an inoffensive alien."

"Couldn't you have paid a fine?" I asked.

"I could," said Mr. Margay, "but on principle I refused. I had done no wrong. I went to prison. Mark what followed!

"The day of my release I took a walk past Richter's shop. It was closed. In the windows were pasted bills: *This shop to let.* I made inquiries next door. Richter, I learned, had gone back to Germany, owing money right and left. That same evening I received a letter from Richter himself, posted in Berlin. He had, he wrote, calculated that I should be just about due out of prison. He admired the stand I had taken. He admired my spirit. Principle before anything. He concluded by referring to me in terms that I shall not sully my lips by repeating, and by informing me that he had enjoyed the wine and cigars and that I deserved to lose my money for being so soft in handing goods over without security. He did not know who was the biggest fool, he said, myself, the policeman who had arrested me, or the magistrate who had found me guilty.

"You speak German? No! Then the address Richter put at the top of his letter, *Konigliche Schloss, Berlin*, words that will ever be engraved on my memory, will probably convey as little to you as to me. Did I let things rest? Believe me, I did not! I am at heart stubborn.

"After considering my best course, I visited the German Consulate and explained about Richter and the case of Rhine wine and the Habana cigars that he had had from me and not paid for. I described my arrest and subsequent imprisonment. I demanded redress.

"The young man to whom I spoke excused himself, politely enough, I admit, and returned with two other officials, older



"Placing the flat portion of his foot against the lower portion of my back, he propelled me with all his force away from him."

than himself but nevertheless having no more authority. That was my impression, later. No more authority.

"Again I related my story, adding details that I had perhaps omitted in the previous recital. When I had ended my story the three officials degraded their calling by shouts of merriment. In short, they laughed heartily. They said they were sorry for what I had suffered, nevertheless I was lucky. How lucky? I asked. I was lucky, they said, that Richter had left me my business, my shop, my living. They knew Richter, it appeared, of old. He was a scamp, of course. What could I do then to obtain compensation? I could do nothing."

Mr. Margay sat for a while in silence, plucking at his lower lip and gazing at me through his glasses in what seemed a half-way state between doubt and nervousness.

"Had I been permitted to see the Consul-General," he said, "the whole course of the world's history might have been changed. For better or worse it is not for me to say. The three officials composed themselves sufficiently to inform me that the Consul-General had more to do with his time than to listen to me. Possibly I raised my voice in wrath. Possibly not. Be that as it may, they accused me of brawling. If I did not remove myself from the premises immediately they would give me in charge. Not relishing the thought of another term of incarceration in jail, I had no other course than to withdraw."

"And what did you do then?" I asked.

"I went straight to number nine Carlton House Terrace."

"The German Embassy?"

"Precisely. I went to the German Embassy, to demand an immediate interview with the Ambassador."

"Did you see him?"

"I did," said Mr. Margay. "Yes, sir, I did. But not immediately. Not until much water had flowed under London Bridge. While I was arguing with the hall porter at the Embassy, a man of a superior type approached. He spoke to the hall porter and then asked me what I wanted. I stated my case briefly. I had a claim against a German called Richter, who had obtained a case of Rhine wine and a box of cigars without payment. The attaché, which I presume he was, cut me short.

"'Don't be a fool!' he said. 'Be about your business!'

"'Take me to the German Ambassador this instant!' I said. 'I demand to see him.'

"And then the hall porter bundled me—yes, sir, he bundled me—out of the house.

"Did I abandon my enterprise?" said Mr. Margay reflectively. "I did not. My blood was roused. I studied the *Arrangements for To-day* columns in the papers and the *Court Circular*, and so on, and I made it my business to learn at what functions the Ambassador would be present. Twice within the next ten days I was able to get sufficiently near him to attempt to speak to him. The first time was when he was entering his car on leaving the Embassy, the second time was outside a house where, presumably, he was dining. On neither occasion did my efforts meet with success. It was, indeed, only with difficulty that I avoided another encounter, two other encounters, with the police force.

"If I say that my determination to interview the Prince had become an obsession I am not exaggerating. Nothing would turn me from my purpose. I would relate my story to him or, so to speak, perish in the attempt.

"By chance I discovered that he would be a guest at a small and select dinner-party given by one whose name I do not feel at liberty to divulge even now, so many years after the event. Certain details are best left in obscurity. It is sufficient to say that by methods I need not particularise I obtained access to the garden at the back of the house where the Ambassador was dining. I remained hidden in the midst of a clump of laurels during the repast. For once fortune was about to favour me."

And here Mr. Margay interrupted the narrative to ask me a question.

"Do you happen to have read a book called *Kim* by a writer called Kipling?"

"Isn't that a rather colourless way of describing one of the finest stories ever written?" I said.

He nodded placidly.

"You'll find it behind you on the shelf," he said.

Involuntarily I turned my head and saw not only the bookshelf in question, but George, the plump nephew, gazing in at us through the glass window of the door that led to the shop. He looked, I thought, worried. He made signs with his hands that conveyed no meaning to my mind. And then he shook his head and disappeared, as the bell over the shop door clinked.

Meantime Mr. Margay was still talking.

" It was like that scene in *Kim*, where Kim hides in the garden until he sees the man to whom he has to deliver the horse-dealer's message. You may possibly recall the incident! What Kim did in fiction I did in fact. I saw the German Ambassador and two other men enter a small room that had a tall French window open to the warm July night. He stood on the top step and talked in German to one of his friends. I moved cautiously on hands and knees through the laurels and I whispered: 'Prince, I have a message I must give you.' Not exactly the truth, as you will realise, but a pardonable deviation in the circumstances. The Prince recoiled in alarm. 'There is someone there!' he said. 'Yes,' I said. 'Me!' And I rose to my feet.

" I was aware of one of the Prince's companions advancing, as it were, like a whirlwind. A clenched fist struck me on the point of the chin and I knew no more until I revived and found myself lying on a sofa indoors. The Prince and his two friends were conversing in undertones and watching me closely from the window. The man who had administered the *coup de grâce* approached.

" 'Now,' he said, 'what message have you for the Prince? Whom do you represent?'

" I replied: 'I represent myself. I have no message. That was a subterfuge to attract attention. I have come,' I said, 'to demand justice.'

" And then, seated on the sofa, still feeling dazed and shaken to the core of my being, I told about Richter and the case of Rhine wine and the Habana cigars.

" 'So it is you, is it?' said the Prince. 'I have heard of you. So!'

" 'We must call the police,' said one of the other Germans. But the Prince forbade him. For some moments he and his two friends debated in German. After a time the man who had hit me—and a more unpleasing cast of countenance I have seldom seen—said that they would permit me to depart on the condition that I revealed nothing of what had occurred. If the story appeared in the newspapers I would be punished in a way that would fail to give me any degree of pleasure. That, of course, was a threat of personal violence, however veiled.

" 'As for your case of Rhine wine and your Habana cigars,' he said, 'I do not believe in them.'

" 'But I have had a letter from Richter!' I said.

" 'There is no Richter!' said he. And with that remark ringing in my ears I was escorted across the lawn and the garden gate was unlocked and I was thrust into the narrow alley the other side of the garden wall and told to go home. I went, boiling with suppressed rage, and feeling, if you will excuse the vulgarism, a little sick.

" That night, sir, I made up my mind to go to Berlin and seek out Richter at the address from which he had written. If necessary I would carry my case into the courts, for I was determined to leave no stone unturned to obtain justice."

Mr. Margay paused.

" And did you? " I asked.

" You had better listen," said Mr. Margay, " and I shall endeavour to relate what happened. I reached Berlin in due course after an uneventful journey, and for the first time in my life—and the last—was on foreign shores. I confess that I was not at my ease. The difficulty in comprehending what was said to me, equally with the impossibility of making myself understood by foreigners, was a greater handicap than I should have suspected.

" I engaged a room in an hotel to which I had been directed by an employé of the railway company who spoke English, and retired to rest as soon as possible. After a sleepless night I arose at an early hour, washed, dressed, and without partaking of breakfast, having little appetite, set out on my search. Though, as you are already aware, ignorant of the German language, I had taken the precaution to copy the address Richter had given on a piece of paper. This I showed to several persons whom I chanced to meet, all of whom by signs directed me on my way readily. Imagine my astonishment when I discovered my destination to be a large building—nay, a huge building—at the top of a thoroughfare known locally as Unter den Linden, a street bordered by lime trees, and no doubt well worthy of attention to one less pressed for time. Had I made a mistake? It seemed scarcely possible! The address was clear. Was Richter, against all probability, a man of wealth? A tailor and an incompetent! Incredible! And then I remembered the tales I had heard of wealthy Germans for purposes of espionage taking up humble occupations *pro tem.* and *pro patria* in foreign countries. Was Richter of this category? A thief!

" I wondered.

" I stood in an open space called the Lust-

garten, so I believe, and after considering what was my wisest course, made up my mind to inquire. Nothing would be gained by holding back now. I approached the building, around which crowds circulated, talking loudly and, it seemed, in high spirits. I accosted a policeman and asked if he could speak English. He looked at me with no great favour and said something in German. Whereupon an elderly gentleman asked what I wanted. I said that I was looking for a man called Richter whom I had met in London. He lived in the big house yonder, I said, indicating the mansion by a wave of my hand. Could he inform me was that the front door, where the two bronze groups of statuary were, or if not, where was it? I wished to call on the owner."

Once again Mr. Margay paused and eyed me gravely.

"You will appreciate my horror when I relate what it transpired I had done. The elderly gentleman held up his hands and exclaimed. A crowd gathered as though by magic. And then, sir, I was told that the Konigliche Schloss was none other than the Royal Palace of Berlin, the Kaiser's residence, and it was hinted that the sooner I took myself off the better. Which I may say I did, crestfallen and humiliated.

"There was only the one thing to do: put the matter before the British Ambassador immediately. This was my next step. That is to say, I visited the Embassy in Wilhelmstrasse and after considerable delay interviewed a young man to whom I explained my predicament. For corroboration of my strange tale I showed Richter's letter. The young man, who was, I am bound to say, polite, though frigid, cut me short.

"'If that man of yours is employed at the Schloss, which he may be,' he said, 'let him alone! But,' he said, 'I don't mind betting you five pounds he's pulling your leg. How much more than the case of wine was worth have you spent already?'

"'That, sir, is no business of yours,' I said.

"'Quite,' said the young man, 'but it is my business that you don't find yourself landed in prison, which you soon will be if left to yourself. We're not popular here at present. Go home!'

"'I shall not go home,' I told him. 'I shall stay in Berlin until I obtain satisfaction, even if I have to take the matter up with the Kaiser himself!'

"All he said was: 'Don't be a fool!'

"I left his presence, feeling that the world was against me. I did not know quite whether I hated British or German officialdom the more. Justice had been denied me.

"It was now afternoon. For some time I sat by myself in the lounge of my hotel and for the first time since I had had the trouble with Richter I despaired.

"And then someone, speaking with an unusual accent, said: 'What's the matter, bo?' Startled, I raised my eyes and saw standing before me a young man of possibly two- or three-and-twenty. I had been prepared to resent his mode of address, but he looked so friendly and so—if I may say so—so concerned for me that my resentment vanished into thin air. He seated himself by my side. 'Old-timer,' he said, 'I've been watching you for the past half-hour. I guess there's something wrong. Shoot!'

"By now I had grasped the fact that the young man was not English, for which I was thankful, but American. I told him about Richter and the case of Rhine wine and the box of cigars. I told him how I had spent a month in jail, how they had laughed at me at the German Consulate in London, how the Ambassador and his friends had threatened me, and how I had visited the Royal Palace in Berlin and been told by the attaché at the British Embassy to go home before I got into trouble. What touched me more than anything was that my companion listened without change of countenance. Had he laughed I should, I am sure, have burst into tears. I was, if you will excuse the terminology, a trifle hipped.

"When I had finished, the young American told me that his name was Bruckle. James Bruckle, commonly known as Jim. My name, I said, was Margay. Simon Abner Margay. He said he was pleased to make my acquaintance. We shook hands and my new friend then said I needed a drink.

"And so, without demur, I accompanied him to an open-air café, where we seated ourselves at a table and drank Pilsener beer and talked. He told me that he came from a city called Pittsburg, but was over in Europe on business connected with his firm and was supervising the erection of some machinery at Liège, in Belgium. His visit to Berlin was, however, in the nature of a

well-deserved vacation. I, in turn, told him about myself.

" Two other young Americans now joined us. After the introductions had been completed, Bruckle said: 'Mr. Margay, tell my friends why you came to Berlin. Possibly their advice as to your next step may prove of value.' I thanked him for his kindly thought and once more related the story of my adventures since I had brought the case of Rhine wine to Richter's shop. The two young men listened at first with grave attention. But by degrees their faces grew more and more red and at last when I had finished they began to laugh, and continued to laugh, heartily, so heartily that the people at the other tables turned and looked at us.

" 'Does my predicament amuse you?' I said coldly.

" 'Not in the least,' said one of the young men, the taller of the two. 'I was just thinking what a riot there will be at the Schloss when they discover what kind of man this Richter is!' That made Bruckle laugh too, and presently I saw the funny side of it and I laughed: and then we had some more beer to drink and I felt that things weren't really so bad after all. I said: 'Well, gentlemen, and what shall I do next?' 'You must see the Chancellor,' said the shorter of the two young men. 'Tell him that unless this man, Richter, is produced, you'll make an international affair of it.' 'I will,' I said. I rose to my feet. 'If you will tell me where he lives, I shall interview him at once.'

" It was Jim Bruckle who advised caution. 'Nothing,' he said, 'is to be gained by haste. It is now seven o'clock! Aren't you hungry?' I realised then that I had not eaten since the night before. 'I am,' I said. 'Then,' said Bruckle, 'you shall be our guest at dinner.' I said I should be delighted.

" Had I the time I could dwell on that dinner at considerable length. But the memory, even so long after, is painful. Our party was increased by another young American whose name I did not catch and whose presence unwittingly brought about the catastrophe that I shall describe in due course. The five of us had a table on an upstairs floor of one of Berlin's most fashionable and, I presume, expensive restaurants. Although not as a rule an admirer of Continental cooking I considered the meal excellent. I ate with more appetite than I had anticipated.

" Naturally, I presume, the conversation at table dealt mainly with myself and my adventures. I asked for advice. Suppose the Chancellor refused to see me. What then? We discussed the pros and cons keenly. Some of the suggestions offered were, I am bound to confess, absurd. The possibility of interviewing the Kaiser himself, put forward by one of the party, I rejected as impolitic. The one avenue to the Kaiser was through the Embassy, and that, I pointed out, had been closed through my argument with the attaché. The tall young man, who had been drinking rather more than I should have thought wise, humorously suggested that I should enter the Palace disguised as an Admiral of the German Navy with a false beard, a suggestion that was greeted with shouts of laughter. And it was then that my friend Jim Bruckle discovered that the young man who had joined us for dinner had not heard the full story of my feud with Richter, and he begged me to relate it once more. This I did, willingly. When I had concluded I noticed that the diners at the other tables were directing their glances towards me. Notwithstanding the applause from Bruckle and his friends, I felt that possibly I had been indiscreet. I whispered as much to Bruckle, but he patted me on the shoulder and said: 'Bo, you're the cat's pajamas! You should worry!' A remark that, though seemingly English on the surface and apparently meant to comfort, conveyed no meaning to me whatsoever.

" Seated at a table near by with a party of other men was a young officer in uniform, a tall, thin young man with an aquiline nose and a slight moustache and a high forehead. While I had been telling my story he had turned in his chair and had gazed at me in seeming amazement. He consulted awhile with his friends, then turned once more and spoke to me in English.

" 'Sir,' he said, 'your voice was so loud it was impossible not to hear a portion of your story. Would it be an error of taste if I asked you to relate the circumstances that led to the interview with the Ambassador in London? Possibly I may be able to be of help to you in your endeavour to find the man who has swindled you.'

" I looked at Jim Bruckle. 'Shall I tell him?' I asked. 'Do, Sam,' he said, 'by all means!' He called me Sam, though I kept telling him that my name was Simon. 'It can do no harm, can it?'

" And so once again I related how I had

supplied Richter with Rhine wine and Habana cigars, how I had spent a month in prison for breaking his shop window, how I had found on my release that he had fled the country, how he had written me a letter with a Berlin address, how I had hidden



myself in the garden, and interviewed the Prince after having been knocked out by his friend, how I had crossed to Berlin and found Richter's address to be the Royal Palace, and at this point I realised that the young officer and his friends were all laughing, that Jim Bruckle and the other Americans were laughing too, and that a gaping crowd of waiters and diners from the other tables were on their feet watching me and listening and laughing, also.

"For a moment I lost countenance. I ended lamely. 'To-morrow I visit the Chancellor,' I said, 'in order to obtain justice.' And at that my audience applauded wildly by clapping of hands and stamping of feet. The young officer, quite purple in the face, rocked to and fro, his hands to his middle, tears in his eyes.

"I rose to my feet and suddenly the noise stopped. It was as though we were

in church. Yes, sir, like a church. I approached the officer. Two steps were all that were needed. He still laughed. I heard Jim Bruckle say: 'Sam, old man, come off it!' I paid no heed. I said to the young officer: 'Tell me, why do you laugh?'

"He looked me up and down with contempt in his eyes. 'Why do I laugh!' he said. 'I laugh because never in all my life have I imagined so damned a fool!'

"'As whom?' I said. And suddenly I felt that I had gone very cold all over.



"A gaping crowd of waiters and diners from the other tables were on their feet watching me and listening and laughing."

"'As you,' said the officer. 'You Englanders are all the same; you are no worse than the rest of them: damned fools!'

" I did not hesitate. I acted on impulse and correctly. I snatched up his glass from the table and threw the contents into his face, as hard as I could. ' Now,' I said, ' what next ? '

" At once the room was in an uproar. The officer, his face livid with wrath, rose to his feet and struggled to draw his sword, but his friends restrained him. He flung them aside.

" You could not imagine me a man of any great valour, could you ? Nevertheless, I dare say, far back, I may have had an ancestor who was a fighter. I stood my ground." Here Mr. Margay's pale, lean face relaxed momentarily into a smile : his faded eyes twinkled behind his glasses. " I clenched my fists. ' Do you care to fight ? ' I asked, as though fighting were an ordinary event in my life.

" ' Fight ! ' shouted the officer. ' I do not fight with pig dogs like you ! But I punish you ! ' What he would do, what he might have done, I do not know. Blind fury swept over me, I swung my fist at a venture, but whether I hit him or some other I cannot tell, for Jim Bruckle, my friend, seized me about the shoulders and swung me away, out of danger. I heard him say, ' You touch him, you big slob, and I'll lay you out ! ' and then I was hurried out of the restaurant, down the stairs and into the street, lit with arc lamps, and cool.

" When next I collected my wits, we sat at a table in a café : myself and the four young Americans, none of whom made much impression on my mind, save only Jim Bruckle.

" ' Aren't you afraid ? ' someone said.

" ' What of ? ' I asked.

" And then Jim Bruckle leaned forward and said : ' You know who that man in uniform was, don't you ? '

" ' I do not,' I said. ' Nor do I care. I would not care,' I said, ' if he were the German Kaiser himself ! '

" ' Well,' said Jim Bruckle, ' he wasn't that, of course, but he was the next best thing, anyway ! '

" ' Who ? ' I said.

" ' The Crown Prince ! ' he said.

" I brought my fist down with a bang on the table. ' That the Crown Prince ! ' I shouted. ' No wonder the Germans are the most down-trodden people in Europe ! ' Then they stopped me. I had gone too far.

" A man who had been seated at a table near us got up from his chair. He stood for a moment looking at me and then went out. Jim Bruckle said : ' Dunno, Sam,' just like that, ' dunno, but I guess it's you and me for the tall timber ! '

" ' I don't follow you,' I said.

" ' We've let things get away from us. Let's beat it ! '

" And still I did not understand ; nevertheless, being tired, I accompanied him. I went to bed as soon as we reached the hotel.

" An hour later there was a knock. I unlocked the door. Two men entered my room and told me to dress. They were plain-clothes detectives. They took me to the Head Police Office in the Alexander Platz, where I was questioned by one I gathered was the Chief of the Police. He had the impertinence to suggest after hearing my story that I was—how shall I put it ?—not quite right in my head. I told him that the Prince had brought his trouble on himself. He discussed my case with several subordinates. Then he said : ' You will leave Germany early to-morrow morning. Do you understand ! ' ' Nothing would give me greater pleasure,' I said.

" Jim Bruckle was waiting for me when I returned to the hotel, news of my arrest having somehow reached him. When he saw me he said : ' I thought they had you for sure. What happened ? ' I told him. ' If I'm not on my way out of Germany to-morrow morning I'll be arrested.' And then Bruckle said he had an idea that life in Berlin was not going to be healthy for him any more than for me. ' I guess,' he said, ' I had better go back to Liège and get on with the job. Come too, Sam. I'll take care of you. You need a rest bad.'

" Jim was right. I needed a rest. I wasn't myself. I felt, to tell you the truth, downright ill. I had the same sensations as I have prior to my yearly bout of influenza, a malady to which I am liable. First I was hot, then cold. My temperature was much above normal. Had it not been for my attack on the Prince I would have kept to my bed for the next two or three days. All this I told Jim Bruckle, who was much concerned.

" The fact was, though I did not know it at the time, the disappointments I had experienced, the rudeness and violence I had been subjected to ever since I had set out in search of Richter, on top of my month in prison, had exhausted me and reduced my vitality below par. I was not myself. And the more I considered my treatment the more did I loathe and despise the

country I was leaving next day. And so, sitting in my room, not able to sleep, I wrote a letter, which I posted with my own hand next morning on my way to the railway station with Jim Bruckle, *en route* for Liège. And to whom was the letter written, do you think ? "

Realising that Mr. Margay had once more asked me a question, I answered that I could not say.

He leaned forward and spoke in a whisper.

" The Kaiser."

" You wrote to the Kaiser ? " I said.

He nodded his head.

" To his Imperial Majesty, Kaiser Wilhelm. It is a great regret to me that I omitted to keep a copy of my letter, but it ran somewhat like this."

He wrinkled his forehead in the effort to remember and then quoted :

" Sir,—I write as one man to another, regardless of so-called rank. I write as an English gentleman.

" A neat touch, that. Distinctive.

" I regard your nation as a nation of curs. You prate of civilisation. There is no civilisation in Germany. The rabble you rule are worthy of you and your abominable family. I have to-day wasted a glass of wine by throwing same over your eldest son ; had I the chance I would willingly have done the same thing to you. I came to Germany in all peace and friendliness, hoping to find justice. I found oppression, abuse, mockery and violence. A German, one Richter, employed in your own Palace, as I have good reason to believe, robbed me. I can obtain no redress. I no longer care. But, mighty Kaiser, listen. England is a closed country to you and yours henceforward and from now on. The insults I have had to swallow I shall visit upon you, as head of a nation of scoundrels. I despise you from the depths of my heart. Nevertheless, I hope for a reply and a safe conduct to Berlin to continue my search for Richter.

" Simon Abner Margay.

" That, sir, was more or less the letter I wrote. I ended by putting at the foot of the letter my address : Poste Restante, Liège, Belgium.

" That morning I left Berlin with Jim Bruckle, who was apprehensive that even now I might be detained by the police. Indeed, it was not until we had crossed the Belgian frontier that he threw off his uneasiness and became his usual self. By this time, however, I was so tired that I no longer cared what became of me. As soon as we arrived at our hotel I went straight to bed and slept for twenty-four hours without stirring.

" When at last I awoke—August the fourth was the date : bear that in mind, please !—Jim Bruckle sat by my bed. I could see he was worrying and to reassure him said I was feeling much better. And then I remembered.

" ' Jim,' I said, ' I must get up and dress and go to the post office. I'm expecting a letter.'

" ' How could you be expecting a letter,' said Jim, ' when nobody knows you're in Liège ? '

" ' Somebody does know I'm in Liège,' I said. And then I told Jim, just as I told you, about the letter I'd written to the Kaiser and what I had put in it. ' I was hoping,' I said, ' that the Kaiser would have the common decency to write to me and ask me to return to Berlin so that my case might be gone into. For, after all, Jim,' I said, ' the Crown Prince had no right to laugh, had he ? He only got what he deserved.'

" ' Sam,' said Jim, and his embarrassment surprised me. ' Sam, I have a confession to make. The officer you threw the wine over was not the Crown Prince at all ! '

" ' Not the Crown Prince ! ' I said.

" ' No,' said Jim. ' I said that he was, on the spur of the moment, for a joke, Sam, to see what you'd do. I think you behaved splendidly and I ask you to accept my apology for having played a mean trick on you.'

" For a while I considered. And then I said : ' Jim, don't say another word. A joke's a joke. Let's talk of something else.' But, though I had passed the affair off lightly, Jim's confession had been a blow to me. ' I'll go to the post office, all the same,' I said.

" And then Jim said he had something very serious to tell me. I wondered what could be more serious than what he had already told me, but I made no comment. ' Sam,' he said, ' the Germans are about to invade Belgium, if indeed they have not already crossed the frontier. It's come at last ! '

" I sat up in bed, thrilled, I need scarcely say.

" ' Jim,' I said, ' I see it all. What you told me in jest was the solemn truth. It was the Crown Prince that I threw the wine over. This proves it ! '

" He gazed at me, as one petrified. ' How's that ? ' he said.

" ' Don't you understand ? ' I said. ' The Kaiser has determined to capture me. Liège will be the objective of his Army ! '

Mr. Margay leaned back in his chair and crossed one leg over the other and hugged his knee.

"And Liège *was* the objective of his Army. Jim Bruckle and I escaped by the skin of our teeth. Even now I do not know how it was that the Germans did not catch up with us."

And then I asked a question.

"And you mean to say, Mr. Margay, that the Germans invaded Belgium because of you?"

"Undoubtedly. My letter to the Kaiser was the final straw that set the European conflagration alight. He left nothing to chance to take me prisoner. On our flight through Belgium I knew that the Uhlans were never far off. It was a miracle that I went free.

"I don't mean to say that all was peace in Europe before my raid on Berlin. I don't pretend that Germany was not pining for war. That has been proved, I dare say. But had I not come to Berlin in search of Richter, had I not thrown the glass of wine over the Crown Prince, there would have been no fighting, Belgium would not have been overrun, Britain would never have come into the war, or Italy, or America. Of that I am positive. And my poor friend, Jim Bruckle, would be living to-day."

Mr. Margay broke off with a sigh and sat staring into the red glow of the fire.

George, the plump nephew, opened the door and entered the room.

"Uncle Simon," he said.

Mr. Margay roused himself.

"And that's how it was," he said. He turned to George. "Well, George, what is it?"

"There's a small girl wants some almond toffee. Where did you put that new lot that came in this morning?"

Mr. Margay rose to his feet briskly.

"I'll go and get it," he said.

He hurried out of the room into the shop.

"Was he talking about the war?" said George.

"Yes," I said. "He was."

"Ah!" said George. "Well, as a favour to all of us, don't you do nothing to persuade him that what he told you wasn't just what he said. If he thought that the Kaiser had never set eyes on his letter he'd break his poor silly old heart." Here George tapped his forehead significantly with his forefinger. "Y'understand what I mean, don't you?"

I understood.

BUTTERFLIES.

IN April all the girls that with shy glances
Have captured youths at the mid-winter dances
Only to weary of them, and the youths themselves
That know they are put back upon the shelves
And now are mateless,—these, in spite or pining,
Remove old letters from the silken lining
Of scented coffers or from pigeon-holes
Where they lie docketed, and tear the scrolls
Into a thousand thousand bits that twirl
Up in the air to mock each boy or girl.
"Love's dead!" they say. "No more those silly letters
Shall tease our memory with the sorry fetters
That we are free from." But the wind takes all
The tattered fragments up and lets them fall
In form of butterflies white-winged that sip
From sun-lit flowers more sweet than any lip,
With lips inconstant. While the maids lament
The love they flouted in each letter rent,
And the fond youths, now grown regretful too,
Vainly cry out, "Come back, sweet *billets-doux!*"

WILFRID THORLEY.

THE REAL STORY OF LADY HERMIONE FAWCETT

By RICHMAL CROMPTON

ILLUSTRATED BY J. DEWAR MILLS

A GROUP was idly discussing abstractions in the club, as one is apt to do when time hangs heavy on one's hands. I don't know who began to talk about loyalty or who it was who said that a personal loyalty always outweighs an impersonal loyalty. He ended by saying, "Suppose a man discovers that a friend of his has committed a crime. Can you imagine his handing the culprit over to justice? I don't mean, of course, that he'd necessarily let an innocent man suffer—that makes the case a little too extreme. But suppose that the doer of the crime went undiscovered by justice, I think that the man's friend would prefer to lie low about it. Personal loyalty to a friend would outweigh impersonal loyalty to the laws of one's country."

Smithson, who hates abstractions and wanted to play golf, glanced out of the window at the pouring rain and muttered moodily, "Well, as none of us has ever been in such a position or is ever likely to be in such a position, I don't see what use it is talking about it."

And a little old man, who was at the edge of the group rather than in it, suddenly said:

"Pardon me, I have been in such a position."

We looked at him with interest. His name, we knew, was Harlowe, but he had only lately joined the club and none of us was intimate with him.

"When? . . . How did it happen?" said Brendon with a sort of shameless eagerness.

Brendon writes and is always on the look out for "copy." If in a moment of rash confidence you disclose your family's skeleton in the cupboard to Brendon, you're as likely as not to find the whole thing hashed up into a short story in the next magazine you open. I said something to this effect but Brendon only said impatiently: "Oh, shut up . . .!" And then again to the old man:

"What was it exactly in your case?"

The old man hesitated.

"Well," he said, "it's rather a long story. . . ."

"Never mind," said Brendon, "fire away. We've all the afternoon before us and it's still pouring buckets."

Most of the group began to disperse. Nothing scares the average man as much as the prospect of a long story, and certainly the little old man looked as if he might turn out a terrific bore. I didn't go only because I happened to be installed in a particularly comfortable chair and couldn't bring myself to get out of it. Young Banfield hovered on the edge of the group, ready either to drift away unostentatiously if the story proved as boring, as it probably would, or to rejoin the group if it turned out to be interesting. Smithson stayed where he was because he was more than half asleep.

There was a short silence. We all looked at the little old man, who met our eyes with a sort of apologetic diffidence. . . .

"It all happened so long ago," he said, smiling. "It may not interest you. . . . There's no harm in telling it, of course, because all the people are now dead."

"Fire away," said Brendon, who seemed to have constituted himself a sort of master of the ceremonies.

"I don't suppose," said the old man uncertainly, "that any of you even remember Lady Hermione Fawcett?"

Young Banfield joined the group abruptly.

"I do," he said rather aggressively; "she was a great friend of my grandmother's. I saw a good deal of her when I was a child. I remember her perfectly."

"Ah," breathed the little old man, "that's interesting. Will you tell us first her story as you know it?"

Young Banfield seemed somewhat embarrassed at thus being made story-teller instead of audience. His touch of aggressiveness deepened.

"Certainly," he said, "I knew both Lady Hermione Fawcett and her story. She was an old friend of my family's."

"Fire away," said Brendon again.

Though he was leaning back in his chair smoking, he somehow had the air of sitting alert with notebook and pencil in hand.

"Everyone knows her story as far as there's any story to know," said Banfield. "She was one of the most beautiful women of her generation. She lost her husband in a particularly tragic manner. He was shot by a burglar whom he surprised trying to steal Lady Hermione's emeralds during a house party. The man was never caught. She had been devoted to her husband and she never married again. It was an open secret that Lord Medland proposed. He was the richest peer in England, you know. . . . That's really all her story. I remember that she had a most devoted old servant called Martin. He did everything for her when her health broke up. He was her footman, butler, and *valet de chambre* combined. I shall always remember my grandmother's description of the poor old fellow standing by her grave weeping like a child. She left him all her money, but he died soon after her. Well, that's all her story as I and everyone else knew it."

"And now," said the old man, "I'm going to tell you her story as I knew it."

We settled down to listen.

"As you say," he began with a glance at young Banfield, "Lady Hermione was considered one of the most beautiful women of her generation. Personally, I considered her the most beautiful. I've never met a woman before or since to come anywhere near her in looks. Her reputation, too, was peculiarly spotless. She moved, of course, in circles where that was necessary. Those were very different days from the days we live in now. A woman who was touched by even the breath of a scandal became at once a social outcast. In those days a woman's social position was entirely dependent upon her reputation. No woman who had figured in a divorce case in any capacity whatever was received at Court, and in Hermione's circle not to be received at Court was social death. Her circle was in fact the intimate Court circle. This by the way, and with reference to what comes later.

"I fell in love with her at first sight and proposed at the end of a month, but of course she wouldn't have me. Rumour said that she was receiving at that time an average of two proposals a day. I think that all the unmarried men of her set proposed to her. She married Sir John Fawcett. He was very wealthy and held a prominent position in Society. It was considered a very good match for Hermione. They were supposed to be ideally happy together. Certainly she filled her position as his wife admirably and I dare say that she was as happy as she deserved to be—though perhaps less happy than she'd expected to be. She'd married him solely for his money and position, you see. She didn't love him. She was in love with a captain in the Lancers who had nothing beyond his pay and who doesn't really come into the story. I think that I was the only person who knew what underlay the idyllic front the Fawcetts turned on the world. He soon found out that she had married him for his money, and he never forgave her for it. He was a very vain man beneath his stiff pomposity. He considered himself to be irresistibly attractive and he'd imagined her to have fallen deeply in love with him. She may have behaved foolishly in letting him see her scorn and dislike of him too clearly, but she was young and confident and beautiful. They had some very bitter scenes in private, but they kept up appearances even before the servants. Everyone believed them to be perfectly happy together.

"Now we come to the house party at Monkton Manor, the Marriotts' county seat. House parties, of course, were a much more prominent part of social life in those days than they are now. It was, socially speaking, vital to be seen at the right house parties

with the right people. And they were either the one extreme or the other. They were either incredibly uproarious or incredibly dull. The uproariousness of the 'smart set's' house parties was proverbial at the time. No 'smart set's' house party was considered a success unless it consisted in a series of riotous 'rags.' The wreckage—both material and moral—used to be considerable. But Hermione did not move in the 'smart set.' She moved in the set above it. And in that set the house parties used to be monumentally dull. The Marriotts' was even duller than most. Rigid meal times, Church on Sundays, a few decorous games of croquet (tennis was considered slightly fast), country drives in the family wagonette, stately 'picnics' at neighbouring beauty spots in fine weather, and in wet weather deadly boredom within the walls of Monkton Manor.

"The Fawcetts were among the first arrivals at this particular house party. Hermione looked more beautiful than ever. Sir John was his most pompous self. He was a terrific talker. He'd go on for hours and hours with people yawning all around him. He was, as I have said, almost unbelievably conceited. Hermione, in public at any rate, endured him rather well.

"There were two drawing-rooms at the Manor, the big drawing-room on the ground floor—an enormous room furnished with the usual atrocities of the period—and the blue drawing-room on the first floor, a much smaller and more intimate affair where the ladies of the party gathered in twos or threes to exchange gossip and confidences.

"On the second night of the house party Hermione was sitting there with old Mrs. Constandine. Hermione did not generally patronise the blue drawing-room. She was generally the centre of attraction in the big drawing-room downstairs. I don't know why she'd gone there that evening. Perhaps someone had been trying to make love to her (that often happened) and she went there for escape. Perhaps she'd gone there to be out of hearing of her husband who was prosing interminably on the politics of the day in the big drawing-room downstairs.

"The two women didn't talk. Hermione was making a tapestry seat for a chair with a large and rather cumbersome tapestry frame. At half-past nine she found that she'd finished her blue thread and went to her bedroom to get some more. Immediately she'd gone there came the sound of a shot from the direction of her bedroom, followed by a scream. Guests and servants, of course, ran from all quarters to investigate.

"They found Sir John lying dead on the floor of the bedroom and Hermione, in a distracted condition, leaning out of the window and screaming to them to catch a man who was making off in the garden below. We could just see his figure through the darkness. Some of the servants went out after him at once, but he was never found. The police saw the traces of his footmarks going and coming and he'd pulled down a good deal of the ivy in his hurried descent. It seemed that he'd come to the bedroom to steal Hermione's emeralds and that Sir John had found him almost before he'd got to work. As a matter of fact, he'd just broken the lock of the drawer in which they were kept. There was a short struggle (it would have appealed to Sir John's vanity to capture a thief single-handed), and in it the burglar snatched up the loaded revolver that Sir John always kept upon his bed table. No one knew whether he fired deliberately or whether it went off accidentally in the struggle. Anyway, either by accident or design he shot Sir John clean through the heart.

"Hermione came in for her thread just as the shot was being fired. She was in time to see Sir John fall and the thief fling himself out of the window. It was a dark night and the police in a country village are not particularly alert. The thief got clear of the neighbourhood and after that, despite the efforts of even Scotland Yard, he succeeded in hiding from justice. They found one of his tools on the bedroom floor, and the revolver in the lake in the grounds. He must have thrown the revolver away as he ran.

"That left Hermione, of course, a beautiful and, apparently, inconsolable widow. Some of her old suitors banded themselves together under an oath to bring her husband's murderer to justice. It was effective, of course, as a piece of melodrama, but it didn't cut much ice, because none of them had any idea how to set about it, and beyond vaguely examining the garden for clues I don't think that any of them did anything at all.

"A few weeks after Sir John's death an incident happened that seemed trivial enough at the time but that I remembered later. I was staying again at a house party that included old Mrs. Constandine. In the middle of a conversation with me one evening the old lady dropped sound asleep. I made some rallying remark about it when she awoke, and she replied indignantly that she

had not been asleep. She said that she'd never in her life fallen asleep in the daytime. Her companion told me afterwards that the old lady was constantly dropping asleep but would never admit it. At the time the incident meant nothing to me.

"As soon as a decent interval had elapsed, suitors began to besiege Hermione again. Of course, she had now the wealth and position her husband had left her as well as her own beauty, and so she was for many reasons a prize worth winning. But she remained a widow. I began to think that either she had loved her husband more than I thought she had or that, as often happens, death had obliterated all his faults from her memory, so that she gave him in death a love she had denied him in life. I knew that she gave up her old lover—the captain who doesn't come into the story—after Sir John's death. He was killed a year or two later in an Indian frontier skirmish, and she heard that news without any change of expression. She certainly seemed to mourn her husband very sincerely. There was no hypocrisy about it. Even after her period of mourning was over I could tell that beneath her pleasant social manner she was desperately unhappy. I don't think that most people realised how unhappy she was, but I knew her better than most people. To me it was as if all her youth and brightness had been killed that night with her husband. She was still a prominent figure in Society, of course. She pretended to take interest and pleasure in her old pursuits, but I knew that it was a pretence. Beneath it she was desperately unhappy. And she was afraid. I didn't know then what she was afraid of, but I knew that she was afraid.

The years passed by without any change. She was still beautiful, she was still popular. But she was still unhappy and still she was afraid.

" Then Lord Medland came upon the scene and something of her old self seemed to return to her. She'd always been an ambitious woman. It was ambition that had made her marry Fawcett. And now ambition seemed to revive her old self. Though she appeared to ignore Lord Medland completely, I knew almost at once that she meant to marry him. She gave me the impression of someone who has undergone a long voluntary penance (remember she'd given up her lover), and who thinks that it now may end. Lord Medland, England's most eligible *parti*, wealthy, aristocratic, connected by blood with the Royal family, was obviously attracted to her. He was accustomed to be courted and fêted. Hermione was cold and indifferent. She always knew by instinct how to handle people. He became more and more ardent. People looked upon the match as a foregone conclusion.

" And now Martin comes into the story.

" I'd advertised for a footman, and Martin applied for the job.

" He called for an interview one evening rather late, and I saw him in the library. He was the right height, had a good appearance, and his testimonials were satisfactory. Yet there was something about him—I wasn't sure what it was—that didn't suggest the typical house servant. For one thing his manner wasn't impersonal enough. It wasn't disrespectful, but it was more natural than the usual house servant's. He spoke like a man instead of an automaton and he treated me—though with the utmost respect—like a man instead of a master. I liked him and I felt curious about him. I began to inquire into his earlier career.

" It turned out that he'd only been a footman for the last six or seven years. Seven years ago he'd found a lady's handbag containing a very large sum of money on a seat in the Park and he'd taken it to her address, which he found on a card inside. She was very grateful. He told her that he wanted work. She was in need of a footman and she suggested that he let her butler train him for the post. He agreed, soon picked up the tricks of the trade, and when she went abroad some years later obtained from her such a good reference that he had no difficulty at all in getting an even better post. His last employer had just died, and so he was applying for the post I'd advertised. It was a plain, matter-of-fact account, and yet I still felt curious.

" ' And before you found the handbag on the seat in the park,' I said, ' before you were trained as a footman, what did you do then ? '

" He looked at me in silence and a curious expression came over his face—an expression that held fear and doubt and caution.

" ' I told the lady that I'd had a market stall but couldn't make it pay,' he said.

" ' And that, of course, was a lie ? ' I said quietly, because I felt pretty sure that if he'd had a market stall he'd have made it pay all right. He was that sort of man.

" ' Yes, sir,' he said.

" ' What were you ? ' I said again.

" He was silent again for a few minutes,

then drew in his breath as if coming to a great decision.

"'I'd like to tell you what I was, sir,' he said. 'I'd like to tell you what had just happened to me when I found that bag. I've never told anyone. You may, of course, hand me over to the police——'

"'I won't do that,' I assured him, perhaps rather rashly.

"He thanked me and continued:

"'I'm telling you because I want to know just how I stand, sir. I don't know much of the law and all that and I've been pretty scared at times ever since, wondering what they'd do to me if they found me.'

"'Let's have the whole story,' I said.

"After another short hesitation he began:

"'Well, sir, before I found that handbag, sir, I was a burglar.' He made the statement quite calmly. 'I used to do country houses, mostly during house parties. If you can find out what time the ladies' maids have supper in the servants' hall the thing is surprisingly easy. Of course, you



"'Well, sir, before I found that handbag, sir, I was a burglar.'"

have to be prepared for something going wrong, and I'd always decided if things went wrong to keep quiet. I'm not a violent man naturally, and even if you are, it's policy to go quiet when you're copped. I'd decided to do Monkton Manor.'

"I started.

"'You know it, sir?' he said.

"I nodded.

"'Yes. Go on.'

"'They were having a house party and there was a Lady Hermione Fawcett staying there. She'd got some emeralds that had been in her husband's family for a good many generations. I waited till I knew her maid was in the servants' hall and then I climbed up to her window. It was very easy. Ivy all the way up and her window wide open. Well, I got in and I'd just forced the lock of the drawer when I heard footsteps outside, and I got behind the window curtains—pretty quick, I can tell you. They were those big tapestry curtains with a good deal of room between them and the window. I could see the room plainly because they didn't quite meet. A gentleman in evening dress came into the room, reading a letter. I knew that the late post had just come in. I'd waited till I'd seen the postman go away from the house so as to be quite safe. He sat down in a chair by the fire and read his letter several times through. I felt pretty uncomfortable, I can tell you, sir. I'd have slipped out and down the ivy again if it hadn't been for the noise it would have made. Well, soon a lady came in—a very beautiful lady. She was in evening dress, too. And they started having a row. Cripes! The things they said to each other. And then he brought out his letter. It seems he'd been on her track for some time and had got proof that she was meeting a Captain someone or other she was in love with. He said that he'd got all the evidence for a divorce and he was going to divorce her. She was in a terrible state. I've never seen a woman in such a state, sir. She begged and pleaded of him. She promised to give the man up. She said she'd be ruined and that the man's career would be ruined. She wept and begged and pleaded. It was terrible to listen to her, sir. She was a very beautiful lady and I couldn't help feeling sorry for her. He was very unkind to her, cold and sneering and sarcastic like. He seemed to dislike her for some reason or other and to enjoy having his revenge on her. He told her that she'd married him for his money and position, so she could try a man without money and position now and see how she liked that. He said a few more things about disgracing her and she said she'd kill herself first. He said, very cold and polite, that she was welcome to, and his revolver was loaded. She snatched it up and for a minute I thought she was going to. I quite forgot to hide behind the curtains by this time and was standing right out into the room, only neither of them noticed me. I tell you, sir, I was scared stiff. Just as she'd got the revolver in her hand he called her a name I shouldn't like to repeat, and it seemed to sting her to madness. She pointed the revolver at him and shot. Then she turned and saw me standing right out in the room. Just for a few seconds we stood looking at each other, with her husband (I suppose he was) lying on the floor between us, and then suddenly she screamed and began calling out that I'd killed her husband. I've always admired courage and resource, sir, and I couldn't help admiring the quick way she tumbled to it, how she might shift the blame off on to me. Formed the whole plan then and there in just a few seconds. . . . Of course, I swarmed down the ivy like lightning and streaked off through the garden. She was still screaming and calling out that I'd killed him. I suppose that she realised then that she was holding the revolver, because she pitched it out after me. I heard it fall into the lake just as I was climbing the wall. A pretty good throw for a woman——'

"He paused.

"'Yes,' I encouraged him, 'and what happened then?'

"'I got to Bermondsey that night and I laid low in Bermondsey for a month or two. I tell you, I was pretty scared, sir. I knew that it would be my tale against hers and I knew it wouldn't be mine they'd believe. I don't mean that I exactly blamed her, sir, because, if you know what I mean, when you're desperate like she was you're apt to take the first chance that comes, without considering other people's feelings. Mind you, she was a murderess, of course, and I don't excuse her, but he was a cold, sneering, disagreeable devil, and any wife would have wanted to shoot him, though all of them wouldn't have had the nerve to do it.'

"I thought he'd moralised over the situation enough, so I said:

"'Yes? And then?'

"'Well,' he said abruptly, 'I saw that my only chance was to go straight for the rest of my life, and I've gone straight. It's become almost what you might call second

nature with me, sir. Once the police and I meet I'm sure they'd somehow get on to the track of that murder and I'd swing for it. When I found that handbag I fairly dashed off with it to the place it belonged. I daren't keep it and I daren't take it to the police. . . . I hope you'll forgive me telling you all this, sir, but I've had a longing to tell someone growing stronger and stronger lately, and as soon as I set eyes on you I saw that you were the sort of gentleman that wouldn't let one down. What I mean to say, sir, is, how does the law stand about it ? It's seven years ago now. But I mean,' anxiously, ' could a copper walk up to me to-morrow and pinch me for it ? I'd swing, sure as fate, if he did. They'd never believe me. . . .'

" ' I shouldn't worry if I were you,' I said. ' I think you may feel pretty safe now.'

" When he'd gone (I'd engaged him as footman) I sat thinking over the amazing story he'd told me. If it were true, it would explain a good deal about Hermione. . . . And, of course, I remembered then old Mrs. Constandine's habit of dropping asleep. She'd dropped asleep probably in the blue drawing-room and hadn't known when Hermione had left her. Hermione had said that she had left her just before she roused the house by her screams and Mrs. Constandine believed her. She would never admit that she'd been asleep. . . . Probably she didn't even know she'd been asleep.

" But I wasn't at all sure that the man's story was true. Then I remembered suddenly that I was giving a dinner-party in a few days' time and that both Hermione and Lord Medland were coming to it. It was generally supposed that the crisis of that affair was very imminent. He was obviously only paving the way to his proposal and Hermione was obviously ready to accept him.

" It occurred to me that it would be rather dramatic to face Hermione with this man as footman. If her story had been a true one, of course, she would at once denounce him as her husband's murderer. I rather expected that to happen, but it didn't.

" She looked more beautiful that night than I've ever seen her look before. Her air of unhappiness and fear had left her. She was radiant. She was an ambitious woman, and ambition dies a hard death. She was on the verge of a dramatic conquest. Lord Medland was completely enslaved. I suppose that by this time she'd almost managed to make herself forget the manner of her husband's death. She had strength of will enough even for that. She wore white satin (few women can wear white satin, but Hermione could) and diamonds. And she was brilliant. Her beauty and her wit and charm held the whole table. And then—suddenly, in the middle of a sentence, she looked up straight into the eyes of the man who had seen her kill her husband. Every vestige of colour left her face. It froze to a grey Medusa-like mask of horror. For some seconds she gazed at the man in silence without moving, without breathing, as if carved in stone, then she fell forward in her chair.

" She was ill for a week, but at the end of the week she appeared again, fulfilling her social engagements as usual. She made no attempt to win back Lord Medland. He'd only sent once to inquire about her in that week of her illness. He couldn't forget her eyes, staring in front of her and dilating with horror. He sensed mystery, and his lordship didn't like mystery. It somehow completely altered his idea of her. As he'd have put it himself, he ' fought shy ' of her after that. He married one of that year's débutantes very shortly afterwards.

" Well, that episode proved to me that Martin's story was true. Martin himself was almost as terrified as she was. He was afraid that she'd free herself from all possibility of detection by handing him over at once to the police. He never had the least hope of his story's being believed, and I think that probably he was right.

" However, a few days later, Hermione asked me to call and see her on special business. She was alone. She looked white and haggard and older than I had ever seen her look. She began abruptly :

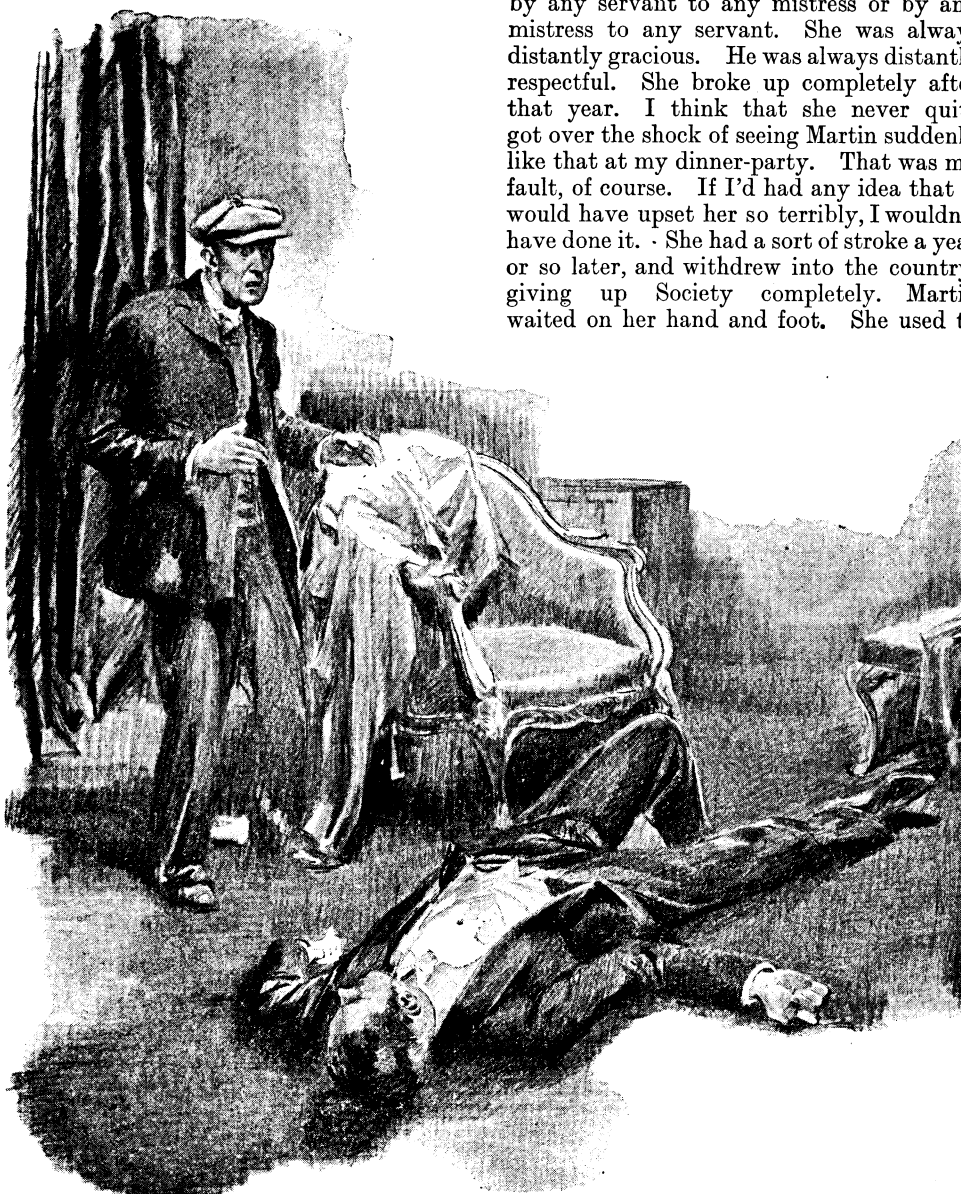
" ' What's the name of your new footman ? The one who was waiting at table at your last dinner-party.'

" ' Martin.'

" ' I'm in need of a new footman. Will you let him come to me ? It sounds an unusual request. I wouldn't ask it of you if you weren't an old friend. I can't give you any explanation except that I happen to be in need of a new footman and that I liked his looks and manners. I'm a woman of whims, you know.'

" That was just what I knew she wasn't, but of course I let her have Martin. He stayed with her till her death. They never once mentioned their first meeting to each other. I suppose that she wanted him as her footman so that she could keep him under her eye and if possible anticipate treachery,

For the first few months they lived under the same roof, as mistress and servant, in abject fear of each other, each in daily terror lest any day the other might prove traitor.



" Just for a few seconds we stood looking at each other, with her husband lying on the floor between us."

Then gradually both began to feel more secure. Their relations became more normal. Martin had always admired her, and his admiration grew till I think that if she had handed him over to the police he'd have gone to the gallows for her quite cheerfully without telling his own story at all. But they never once in all those years said a word to each other that might not have been said by any servant to any mistress or by any mistress to any servant. She was always distantly gracious. He was always distantly respectful. She broke up completely after that year. I think that she never quite got over the shock of seeing Martin suddenly like that at my dinner-party. That was my fault, of course. If I'd had any idea that it would have upset her so terribly, I wouldn't have done it. She had a sort of stroke a year or so later, and withdrew into the country, giving up Society completely. Martin waited on her hand and foot. She used to go round the garden every morning, leaning on his arm. He always arranged the rugs about her in the carriage for her afternoon drive and sat beside the coachman. Later he wheeled her bath chair. They never

spoke of anything more momentous than the garden and the weather. I think that in the last years of her life she'd forgotten their first meeting altogether. He was a most devoted servant, and she was entirely dependent on him. She left him all her money, but he did not outlive her long. . . . He was an old man and he never got over the shock of her death.

"And that, gentlemen, is the real story of Lady Hermione Fawcett."

There was a short silence. We seemed slowly to wake up.

Young Banfield said: "I prefer my grandmother's version."

And Brendon said thoughtfully: "With padding it would make quite a decent-sized novel."



And Smithson, who had been bored stiff all the time (there's not much social value in a fifty-year-old scandal), went over to the window and said:

"I say, it's cleared. I'm going to try to get a round of golf."

THE ARCHDEACON

By L. G. MOBERLY

Author of "Threads of Life," "The Voice," etc.

ILLUSTRATED BY LEO BATES

AND we also bless Thy Holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear; beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of Thy Heavenly Kingdom——"

He had said those great words from the Prayer for the Church Militant over and over again before, but this morning, as they fell slowly from his lips, Archdeacon Dornthwaite seemed to hear them as though for the first time; almost as if he were listening to another voice reciting them, and not his own sonorous tones. Long ago he had adopted that particular tone—very deep and strong—when he was taking the service in Panchester Cathedral; and it reverberated down the choir, and even as far as the nave, with strange impressiveness.

A big man, massive of build, with a certain dignity of bearing, the Archdeacon seemed to match his own resonant voice. His movements were slow and forceful; and as the sunlight fell across his white head and beard, he might have posed as a model for some patriarch or prophet of old. Indeed, not long ago a well-known artist had approached him on this very point, asking whether Archdeacon Dornthwaite could ever consider the possibility of allowing himself to be painted as the prophet Isaiah, in a great picture then under consideration. The Archdeacon had felt pleased at the suggestion, flattered and pleased. That very morning he had been talking over the matter with his wife, as they sat at breakfast in the dining-room which opened on to his justly famous garden.

"Very charming of Sir Felix to propose using my head for his great picture; a great honour to represent such a poet and prophet as Isaiah," he had said, his voice booming out to the garden, where the bees droned round the wallflowers in the beds under the house, and a blackbird sang of coming summer amongst the snowy blossoms on the pear tree. "Very nice of Sir Felix. I shall certainly agree to do as he suggests."

Possible paragraphs in the papers had run in and out of his mind after breakfast on that same Sunday morning, paragraphs referring to the picture of the famous Academician, Sir Felix Brent, and of the well-known Archdeacon who had spared a few moments from his already over-filled day, to pose for the central figure.

"Archdeacon Dornthwaite's own wonderful and poetical sermons bear upon them the stamp of true spiritual inspiration——" His fancy played pleasantly round imaginary paragraphs such as these, whilst he strolled round the garden, his hands behind his back, his eyes glancing contentedly at the results of his first-rate gardener's labours. Such thoughts had still hovered pleasantly in his mind, as he walked across the Close into the great building which was the glory of Panchester; and indeed the cheerful glow engendered by these reflections lingered within him during all the morning service.

He and the prophet Isaiah, the prophet Isaiah and he, Archdeacon Dornthwaite of Panchester Cathedral! Well, after all, when everything was said and done, prophets were not entirely of one age, or of one generation: there was nothing to hinder a man of the twentieth century from going down to future ages as the great teacher of his day.

These were pleasant thoughts that had wandered in and out of the Archdeacon's mind, like a fine thread of gold during the chanting of prayer and versicles, the reading of the lessons, the singing of familiar hymns. The very familiarity of the whole service made it sometimes difficult to concentrate, difficult to check wandering thoughts. The words he uttered had become so much a part of the regular routine of life, that it was not always easy to prevent them from growing mechanical. They came from his lips with

such ease, that he could have said them in his sleep with as little difficulty as in his waking hours. But now—now when those great words from the Prayer for the Church Militant sounded in the Archdeacon's ears, uttered by his own musical voice—some new force seemed to have entered into them. They came to him with a new meaning.

"And we also bless Thy Holy Name for all Thy servants departed this life in Thy faith and fear; beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of Thy Heavenly Kingdom——"

His voice went on mechanically to the end of the prayer. No one in the big congregation observed the slightest falter in that voice, the least change in his demeanour. He stood there beside the altar, a stately, dominating figure, the sunlight falling upon his white head, the echoes of his voice sounding along the aisles and down the nave; but for the man himself the grey walls about him had slipped away; he no longer stood in that wonder wrought in stone, which is Panchester Cathedral.

He was standing in a tiny churchyard on the uplands—a tiny churchyard, whose walls were surrounded by a purple sea of heather.

The door of the little church stood open: he could see the old pews, the quaint brasses on the walls; the uneven flags of the paved floor, the sunlight that fell upon the flags in purple and crimson splashes through the stained glass of the windows. But his footsteps turned away from the open church door, towards the grey wall that separated the churchyard from the sea of heather beyond; and he did not pause until he reached a grave marked by a white cross, close against the wall.

Out there amongst the heather the bees hummed drowsily; the purple glory of the uplands spread away in the sunlight, to a far horizon of dim blue hills that met the overarching sky; the wind that drifted into the churchyard was sweet with the fragrance of pine trees. And the grave was such a little grave! Yet it had seemed in those far-away days to swallow up the joy and hope of all his life.

ELIZABETH DORNTHWAITE,
DEARLY LOVED WIFE OF JOHN DORNTHWAITE,
Aged 22 years.
"Their works do follow them."

Out there in the sunlight, with the sea of heather before his eyes and the fragrance of the pine trees about him, he had made such wonderful resolves, forty years and more ago, forty and more years ago when, on a far-away June morning, he had laid his little wife to rest.

All the light had gone out of his life on that June day! Elizabeth had been friend and companion, as well as wife. They had begun their life together with such radiant confidence, such hopeful gladness. His first curacy in the little upland parish had seemed such wonderful work to them both, and Elizabeth was in everything his right hand. How they had loved her, those upland folk, in whose houses she was a dear friend; whose joys and sorrows she had always shared as if they were her own.

"Like a bit of sunshine she is, sir"—the words of an old parishioner came back into his mind with sudden vividness—"she seems to light up the very place when she comes into it. She's full of light herself."

Full of light herself! The words were so true, so true of his little Elizabeth, with the shining eyes and shining hair, and the smile that reflected the loveliness of her soul. So beautiful a soul lay behind her happy face! Always she had pointed out to him high ideals; always stood firm for the glory of the spiritual; always urged him to follow his highest impulses. During their brief married life, Elizabeth had been the strongest spiritual force in his existence: and when he stood beside the little grave looking at the words upon the cross, he resolved passionately that he, in his own person, would be the good work that should fulfil Elizabeth's teaching, carry on into the rest of his life her beautiful nature.

"Their works do follow them."

The words rang in his ears as he finished the service in Panchester Cathedral, and the organ's notes pealed through the building, as the congregation filed out decorously. And when presently he rose from his knees, and went slowly to the vestry, there was a curiously dazed look in his eyes. He did not linger, as was his wont, to have a word with the Dean, or with any of the Canons. He left the Cathedral by his customary exit, but in a few seconds he had turned back, and re-entering the building by a side door, moved quietly into a small side chapel, and there dropped upon his knees.

His big house in the Close, its luxurious contents, the lunch that was waiting for him—all the round of his usually well-ordered existence—slipped into oblivion. The years that had come and gone since he

stood in that churchyard surrounded by its sea of heather had for the moment vanished as though they had never been; the past was staring in his face, the words on Elizabeth's grave danced before his eyes: "Their works do follow them." And strangely interwoven with those words, came the others which had unwound this chain of recollections, "departed this life in Thy faith and fear; beseeching Thee to give us grace so to follow their good examples——"

He knelt there very quietly, his head bent over his folded hands. He forgot the usual routine of his Sunday. He was oblivious of the fact that his well-trained servants would be wondering why he did not come in to lunch; it escaped his memory that his wife was lunching out; everything connected with Panchester had for the moment escaped his memory. The past claimed him!

His resolutions on that far-away June morning had been so fervent, so sincere. All about him had spread the sense of the spiritual, and its glory; his highest ideals had seemed so easily within reach of performance: it was impossible to imagine that he could ever drop away from the heights. On that June day the world had seemed so far away; its temptations and rewards had made no call to him. To follow Elizabeth's spiritual leading: to show forth the loveliness of her life in his own, to be in his own person—he came back to that—to be in his own person the good work that followed her—these were the sum of his desires. He had resolved; he had prayed; he had been so sure of himself, when Elizabeth's death had left him lonely and heart-broken. And now—now, as for a moment he lifted his eyes to the cross above the altar in the little chapel, a sense of sick shame overwhelmed him. . . .

How many, many years had gone by since he had thought of his girl wife, and the churchyard on the heather! . . . After all, the world had caught him in its toils: he had gloried in being considered "a man of the world." To be consulted on account of his "worldly wisdom" had often flattered and delighted him: all the simplicity and sincerity that belonged to his life with Elizabeth had long since slipped away. The remembrance of those pregnant days in the far past, gave place to memories of the intervening years. Success had come—worldly success! From the upland parish which he and Elizabeth loved, he had passed on to work in a big town, and there his gift as a preacher speedily brought him fame. Fluent of tongue, fluent of pen, his success had been easily achieved, and he had become a popular light amongst the well-to-do in the parish. Popularity delighted him. His simpler life in the past gradually became a mere memory; the present was full to the brim with committee work, meetings, organisation, social gatherings. In many wealthy homes he became a welcome guest: he could dine out practically every night of the week. He was a good conversationalist; his after-dinner stories were witty, but not too racy; he was courted, sought after, flattered, and the little churchyard on the heather dropped farther and farther into the background of his thoughts.

For years he had not married again. Ambition had him by the throat. He was comparatively a poor man, and a meagre home with wife and children, struggling sordidly, made scant appeal to him. So—he had slowly hardened into worldliness—the certainty came to him now, as he knelt there alone—he had hardened into worldliness and selfishness, and the memory of those words, "Their works do follow them," slid away in the track of the other memories hidden under the growing mound of worldly success, fulfilled ambition.

Preferment followed preferment, and then, when as Vicar of a fashionable church he found a no less fashionable congregation at his feet, he recognised the wisdom of asking Millicent Courland to be his wife. He was bordering on middle age; she was only a year or two his junior. She was a maiden lady, well connected and rich; good-looking, in a certain statuesque style of her own; eminently fitted to sit at the head of his table, when, as he hoped, he should be a Canon, later perhaps, of Panchester.

Millicent Courland accepted him. It was all very decorous, very dignified, very conventional; unlike—how unlike—his eager, impetuous courting of Elizabeth, and the delirious happiness of their engagement!

The cross over the altar grew dim before his eyes, his hands all at once gripped the hard wood of the chair in front of him. . . . The shining glory of Elizabeth's face on their wedding day had been like a benediction. In the little white gown she had made for herself she looked like some radiant being from another sphere—spreading light around her. And always—yes, that was it—always the spiritual looked through the shining of Elizabeth's eyes, the sweetness of her smile! . . .

Millicent? Their wedding had been a very grand affair in a London church, with a smart congregation, and Millicent had looked handsome and stately; and they had sworn to love and cherish one another. But—the Archdeacon's head dropped upon his hands—love, as he and Elizabeth had known love, had played no part in his second marriage, the marriage that was just one more concession to prudence and worldly wisdom!

"Give us grace so to follow their good examples, that with them we may be partakers of Thy Heavenly Kingdom——"

Would he ever be a fit partaker of that Heavenly Kingdom?

A wave of humiliation swept over the kneeling man. He could not picture Millicent, his portly, worldly wife, as ever wishing to play any part in that Kingdom! And would he be worthy to greet Elizabeth, even should she come to heaven's gate to meet him, with shining eyes and outstretched hands?



"A big man, massive of build, with a certain dignity of bearing, the Archdeacon seemed to match his own resonant voice."

"Partakers of Thy Heavenly Kingdom." He would have a long, long way to go, a weary path to tread, of humiliation and unselfishness, before he could even hope to partake of the Kingdom.

Some words he had read, vivid words by a modern poet, floated into his brain:

"If we would build anew, and build to stay,
We must find God again,
And go His way!"

He had lost God. The world had crowded out God. He could not build the Kingdom or be a partaker of it, because he had forgotten God. He had preached of finding God. He had never practised what he preached!

His head sank lower upon his clenched hands. In his conceit, in his spiritual pride, he had dared to think of himself as a great teacher; he had supposed it possible that he could sit as a model for that great prophet and poet Isaiah! He had forsaken the spiritual for the worldly; he had slept the sleep of the self-righteous, and now—he was awake! . . .

He raised his head. A gleam of sunshine lighted up the cross above the altar, and the Archdeacon lifted up his hands. The memory of that other cross in the tiny churchyard on the heather was strong upon him.

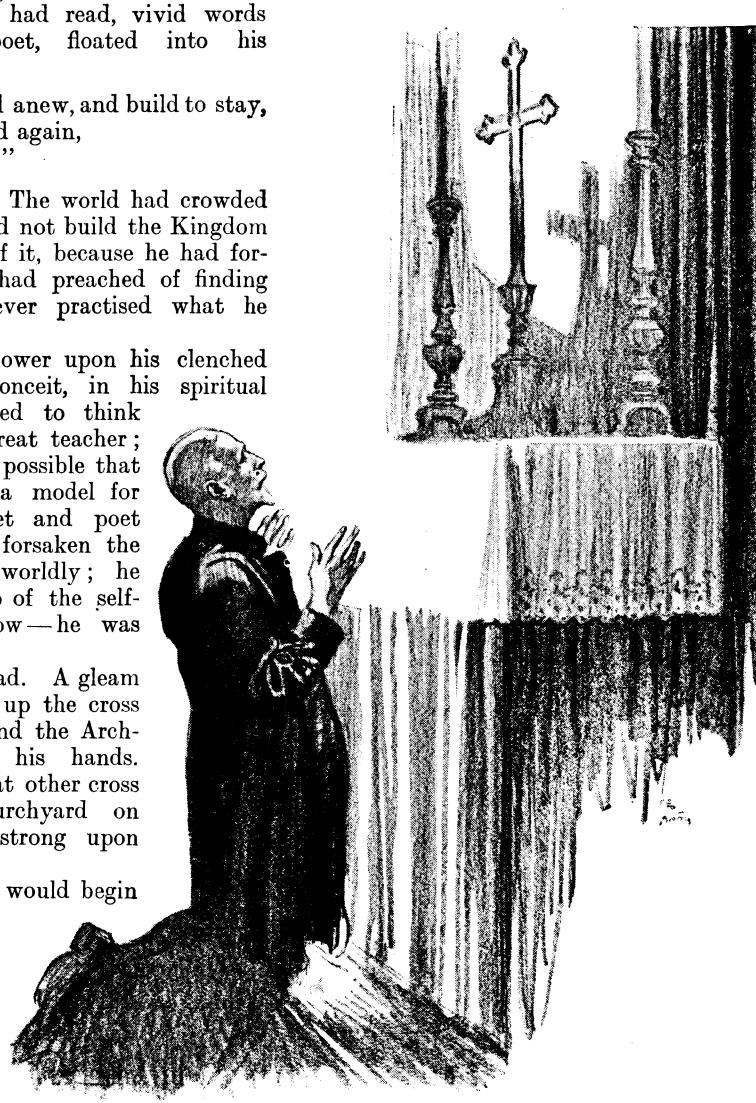
From to-day he would begin again. He would struggle back to simplicity, back to the spiritual, "out of the wilderness," God helping him, "into the light."

* * *

"No, my dear, I had no lunch. I did not want any lunch," he was saying gently to his portly wife an hour later. "I had things to think out."

"Absurd!" she retorted with a sniff. "You really mustn't take to forgetting your meals; and by the way, I met Sir Felix to-day. He is coming to tea to talk over those sittings."

"I shall be glad to see him." The Archdeacon's voice was still gentle, but it was very firm. "I have decided, after all, that I cannot do what he asks. He must find another model. I am not the man to sit for the prophet Isaiah. He must find another model. I am not worthy."



"He moved quietly into a small side chapel, and there dropped upon his knees."

THE GOSSIPERS

By LOUIS KAYE

ILLUSTRATED BY ROLAND M. CHANDLER

THE child that lay in the woman's arms opened its eyes as the sun rose, and began to cry. The woman rocked it, and began singing a little lullaby. But her voice was tired and there was no life in it. Nor was there any life in her eyes as she gazed round upon the spread of water which met the sky everywhere and then upon the two men in the boat with her.

The boat was no more than a large dinghy, and the two men, one who steered and the other who sat on the thwart amidships by the mast with its drooping sail, were the mate and the supercargo of the vessel that had foundered. The mate was a tall thin fellow with tanned, sunken cheeks, sunken eyes; the supercargo was younger, as young as the woman with the child, and not so tanned as the mate by sun and weather. It was he who steered.

All he had to steer with was a broken oar, and all the motive power they possessed lay in the little sail, patched and old, which now drooped useless and now bellied taut before a tentative puff of wind. These puffs were separated by intervals of calm when the little corrugations went out of the sea and only the steady heave and fall of the silky swell was left. This lifted the boat up and dropped it down again, giving the passengers the feeling that they were on the end of a large see-saw which never ceased to move.

When the boat was raised high by one of these snaky movements of the ocean you could see the sun just lifting over the horizon; when the boat sank in the troughs you could see nothing but the towering bare hills of brine all round and the blue sky above. "Like a prison," said the supercargo.

"Look at the sun," said the mate when the boat rose again.

"There's a haze round it," said the supercargo.

"And that means heat," said the mate.

The child had ceased crying and was looking at the blue sea out of large eyes of the same colour. Presently it lifted its head, so that its golden curls fell away from its face, and asked: "Mummy, shall we see God?"

"Hush!" said the woman. "A ship will find us."

When they rose on the top of another snaky heave of the sea they all looked round as though for the ship that never came. Then when the boat sank in between the gleaming hills of brine again, they all looked at each other as if to say, "How much longer?"

The supercargo had his coat off, and his white shirt, with its sleeves rolled up, was open at the neck. He had lost his hat, as he had lost many other things, in the confusion of taking to the boats at short orders at midnight, and upon his head was knotted a red handkerchief given him by the mate. When he raised his bare arm and drew it across his brow, little drops of moisture stood out on it. His lips were swollen and cracked, and when he spoke his voice, like the voices of the rest, was thick and strained. He might have said, as the mate said, "My tongue's like a dry rag."

There was a locker in the stern of the boat, and in it were two jars. Their sole supply of water was here, and they had no food. It was two days since they had eaten, and in all that time they had drunk sparingly, and taken care not to spill one precious drop from the bright aluminium pannikin. The child wanted water the most, and the child got the most, but that was far from enough.

"How long will it last?'" asked the woman.

The supercargo saw that she was looking at the locker behind where he sat to steer, and answered: "It might keep us going till to-morrow if we go steady with it."

"And by then a ship will have sighted us," said the woman.

"We must be sighted by then," said the mate. "We aren't in such a very lonely stretch of sea, and though there aren't many steamers so far from the main routes a stray schooner or something ought to show up when there's a wind to fetch her along."

"There hasn't been much wind so far," said the supercargo.

"Not as you'd notice it," said the mate. "That's why nothing's come along. A vessel might be lying just over the horizon there this minute, for all we can tell."

"Yes," said the supercargo, "and a breeze would lift her in sight."

The sun had crept high enough now to be seen even when the boat sank in the troughs, but the tentative puffs of wind that had come truant-fashion over the monstrous ocean no longer put in an appearance. The sail hung in slack folds from the little mast, and bulged against the mate whenever the mast swayed a little to starboard with the motion of the boat on the swell.

"If we don't get any wind," said the mate, "we might as well take this piece of canvas down and use it as an awning to keep the sun off the lady there."

"We might," agreed the supercargo, hauling his now useless oar in from over the stern. "But how are we going to rig it?"

The mate had risen and was lowering the sail. "If you'll take this halyard," he said, "and make it fast to that fall-ring in the stern, I'll fix this end to the mast and then we'll have a line we can spread the sail over."

This was done, and there was no more sunshine falling upon the woman and the child.

"Now I can't see the sky where God lives," said the child, looking at the canvas overhead.

The mate smiled a little; the woman smiled, and the supercargo smiled a little; but smiles did not live long in this open boat abroad on the spreading sea. Uncertainty and sometimes fear ate into the soul like a canker; hope alone survived. Now it was a big thing at some new and optimistic revelation on the part of the kindly mate; now it was a small thing as the sun burned hot or the breeze died down or as the dawn came again upon a lonely sea, or as glances roved to the locker where the water was kept, but it was always there like a fire that could not be put out.

The next time the child spoke it was to ask for a drink.

"Say please, dear," said the woman.

"Please, Mr. Morton," said the child.

"Call me Carston, old man," said the supercargo.

The woman and the mate both looked at him.

"It's my real name," he explained. "Carston—John Carston. The other was only an alias. And, somehow or another, I don't think I'll need it any more."

Neither the woman nor the mate said anything, and the supercargo opened the locker and displayed the two jars. Each of these had a top to it, and each was earthen, and each had a little tap so that it was not necessary to remove the top except to see how much water was left.

"There you are," said the supercargo, as he partly filled a pannikin and handed it to the child.

"I think," said the mate, "we might all have a drink while we're about it."

There was only the one pannikin, and they had to wait till the child had drunk. The woman was next, and then the mate, and last of all the supercargo. He held the pannikin under the tap of one of the jars, turned on the tap, turned off the tap, raised the pannikin to his lips. When he had put it back in the locker, and was closing the locker again, the mate said:

"You're using the two jars?"

"There's still a little left in the one we started on first," said the supercargo.

"That's good," said the mate.

Two men, both rather portly, came into the club-room together, and both smoked cigars. They sat in lounge chairs near to each other and near to a little table, and the waiter brought them whisky and soda, and they took up daily papers from the table and hid themselves behind them and behind innumerable clouds of smoke.

Then one of them appeared from behind his paper and looked at the other one and said: "Oh, by the way, I was talking to poor old George Carston last night. Rather rough on the old fellow having his other son, Gerald, make a mess of things too, wasn't it?"

"I never heard," said his companion, appearing from behind his paper. "What's Gerald done?"

"Oh, horses. I thought you knew. Poor old Carston gave him a free rein to see what he would do, and the first thing

he did was to look up the bookies. Lost a cool thousand, and then went on the spree for a week. Poor old Carston isn't too well off, you know, but he had had hopes of Gerald, and to find he's as big a fool as his brother was a hard blow to the old fellow."

"And what became of John?"

"Oh, he's been away for some time now. Left after the Grimsby trouble. What became of him, I don't know, but there was some talk of his getting in the soup as usual somewhere in Africa—or was it Australia? However, he's not been heard of for some time, and I don't suppose poor old Carston is grieving much over that."



"'I never heard,' said one of the men, appearing from behind his paper. 'What's Gerald done?'"

"Same old tale! Well, I suppose young men will be young men, and they aren't any worse than they used to be."

"Perhaps not. And really I don't think Gerald is quite the waster his brother John was. There's good stuff in him, and he's young yet."

"No, I suppose not. I say, can you oblige me with a cigar? Thanks, old man. I see by this paper the Gresham Consolidated are up a shilling."

There was still no breeze to ruffle the silky swell, and the sun was still blazing

down on the awning the mate and the supercargo had stretched over the halyard rigged from stern to mast. The sea was now so bright and glaring it pained the eyes to gaze upon it; the heat was now so intense that one felt stifled as within an oven. But if it pained the eyes to gaze around they gazed round nevertheless.

"We can't expect to see anything till there's wind," said the mate.

"Perhaps it will be calm all day," said the woman.

"We might have to make another night at sea," agreed the mate.

"Well, it's not so bad at night," said the supercargo. "It's pretty cool compared with this heat, especially toward the morning. It's the sun that makes us so thirsty."

The child was sitting up on a thwart under the awning now, and as his short legs were clear of the floor of the dinghy he was able to swing them forth and back just as a child in a tram or on a bus or in a ferry-boat might swing them, and it was of a child doing such a thing in such circumstances that John Carston was reminded as he sat in the stern-sheets under the awning. Yet the child was in an open boat at the mercy of the capricious sea, and no man could tell when the end might come, for of all things the sea is the most treacherous, and those who love it are not always without fear of it even as those who hate it.

The mate knew the sea. He knew it better than the supercargo, and far better than the woman; but familiarity had not bred contempt, and he feared the two things that the woman feared, that they might die of thirst upon it or that it might rise up and engulf them, and he could not rid himself of those fears. But if he had never grown out of his fear of the sea, he had at least grown strong and hard and to a certain extent fatalistic. And this enabled him to appear fearless and to nourish a counterfeit optimism.

"In this part of the Pacific," he said, "there aren't any gales at this time of the year, that's one thing."

This was a lie, and he knew it was a lie even as he uttered it, but there was the woman who must be comforted with optimism, and that was the kind of man he was.

And likewise the supercargo: "That's true," he said. "And we might get a good steady breeze that would carry us a long way with the sail without blowing hard enough to swamp us."

"Don't you think," said the woman, rather dubious, "that it was a gale the night the schooner went down?"

"Well, it was blowing," agreed the mate. "But in the dark it seemed a lot worse than it was. And it couldn't have been very bad, or this boat would never have lived through it."

"It is hard to understand how it did when the bigger vessel went down," said the woman.

But to the mate it was not hard to understand. "The old hooker ought never to have put out at all, much less with a woman and a kiddy aboard. She always leaked, and was worm-eaten till she was like a sieve. A ship's like a man, can't last for ever, and though she might have looked good to some for a while longer, the heart was gone out of her and she just gave up the ghost. But one thing, this is a solid boat, even if she is small."

"And if we did get a wind," said the woman, "how long would it take us to make land?"

"Well," said the mate, "I don't rightly know, not having anything aboard to work out our position. But I know there's the Ellice Islands over yonder, and if a good sailing breeze hopped along now maybe we could make 'em by noon to-morrow."

"I think that's a bit of a breeze coming now," said the supercargo.

The mate went forward of the awning, and stood up on a thwart to have a look. "No," he said, "there's nothing in that. It's only that the sea's a little bit dark there because of that cloud."

The cloud had appeared from nowhere, a fluffy ball with a dark under portion. It hung in the sky above the sea, apparently quite still. But then it split in twain, and as the two halves drifted away from each other they got smaller and smaller, and vanished back in the ether whence they had sprung.

"Like a man dying and vanishing as if he never was," thought the supercargo.

The mate had returned from his stand on the thwart, and was once more seated under the awning. There was a certain relief in having this spread of canvas shut out a certain portion of the sky, for so much gazing at so much sea and sky was bad for a man's courage, inasmuch as it made him feel small and puny in the midst of that which was vast and strong. But the

canvas was the work of man's hands, and there was comfort in it.

"Well, it's nearly noon now," said the mate, looking at his watch.

"I'll be glad when it's gone by," said the woman. "And yet the day's precious to us, for we could be seen if a ship came, couldn't we?"

"At night too," said the mate. "You see, we'd sight the lights of any vessel appearing over the skyline, and all we'd have to do would be to light a flare. I've got a kerosene tin for'ard, and I could use a bit of unravelled rope."

"Yes, we needn't worry about that," said Carston.

As the morning had drawn on, the sea had begun to rise a little. There was as yet no breaking of the swell, no swishing of sliding seas as there is when a wind is about; but the swell grew, and yet remained silky under the bright sun. There was life and energy gathering in it, and it was not without a sort of sullen and unspoken menace.

The dinghy was beginning to feel the changed action of the sea. But it only moved up and down, and swung round a little; it made no progress ahead or astern or any other way that could be discerned. It dipped its bow, then its stern; it rolled a little to starboard, then a little to port; it rose and fell, but there was no other movement, for that was the only movement of the sea, up and down, up and down, ceaselessly and untiringly up and down.

"And it's still coming up," said the supercargo.

"The sea, you mean?" said the mate. "Yes, but it can't hurt us."

"No," said the supercargo. "Only a stiff wind could hurt us."

The sun was directly overhead now, and though the awning threw shade into the boat there was the heat of the sun's rays in that shade. The supercargo said he could feel it burning his shoulders, and the woman said it was burning her face. She looked more tired now, and her eyes were almost hopeless. About her brow her fair hair clung in wisps where the moisture lay, and she complained of a headache.

"Let your hair down," said the supercargo, and blushed.

The woman smiled, and she let her hair down, for it was a day when it was worn long; it fell over her shoulders in golden waves and made her look very girlish.

"My mother used to do that when she had a headache," explained Carston.

"So did mine," said the mate. "And my wife too."

"I never knew you were married," said the woman.

"I'm a widower," said the mate.

If there had been menace in the sea before, it was greater now, for it heaved terribly and the dinghy swung high, poised for a moment on the glassy top of a hill of brine, and then sank sickeningly down to where nothing could be seen but glittering walls of sea. But still there was no wind, and still, save in a few places and at rare intervals, there was no breaking of the water. If there had been a little more, the menace of it might have seemed less, for so much movement with so much silence was uncanny.

The mate had got up from his seat and gone to the thwart forward of the awning again. He was standing there, poised as if on a swaying limb, gazing round.

"What is it?" asked the woman.

"I thought I saw smoke," said the mate.

"Were you mistaken?" asked the woman.

"Yes," said the mate, and came back under the awning. After he had been seated a little while he saw the woman looking at the locker, and he looked at the supercargo. "You're in charge of the water," he said.

John Carston nodded. "We'll have another drink."

He had opened the locker and was filling a pannikin. He handed it to the woman, and as he passed it along all eyes, including his own, followed the clear cool water in the aluminium receptacle as if it were life itself.

"It is!" thought the supercargo.

The two men in the club were joined by a third, and then by a fourth. The third was a rather elderly man with an eyeglass and grey hair scarcely concealing a pink scalp; the fourth was a younger man with a closely clipped black moustache and a thin cynical face.

They sat down.

"Oh, by the way," said the grey-haired man after a while, "my son tells me he met a fellow in India who ran across Carston's boy John in South Africa. He was just leaving for Australia."

The two rather portly men who had laid down their papers and lit fresh cigars,

turned their heads and both their finger-supported cigars pointed like miniature cannons at the elderly man with grey hair.

"Oh?" Even their eyebrows lifted simultaneously. "And how is he getting on?" asked one of them.

"Haw!" The grey-haired man had taken hold of his eyeglass and made a gesture with it; at the same time his right leg, which was crossed over his left knee, gave a sympathetic jerk. "The bounder was making a mess of things as usual. I don't know exactly what the trouble was, but you may depend that Carston would be at the bottom of it."

The youngest of the four, the man with the black clipped moustache, spoke for the first time: "That's always the way! Give a dog a bad name and hang him. It appears to me there's always a lot of talk about poor old John being a bounder, but what's he done that's really over the fence? Name one thing."

But his voice was a voice alone, like the bubbling of a brook beside the roar of Niagara Falls, and it was ignored.

It seemed that the sea was not going to rise any further, for the lift and dip and sway of the dinghy became no more abrupt or agitated. Nor was there any great swishing of broken water; the silence was still uncanny, and when any of them spoke the words sounded extraordinarily loud and one fancied they could be heard for a long way across the perpetually re-made hills and valleys of the sea.

"Wouldn't it be good," said the child, "if we could get out and walk over the water as Jesus did?"

"Or if it opened up," said the supercargo, "like the Red Sea, and we could walk on the bottom of the ocean."

"I'd be satisfied," said the mate, "if I saw a ship coming over the horizon." To himself he added: "That would be pretty near a miracle too, I'm thinking!"

When they lifted on the swell again they all looked round under the awning at the skyline, which appeared broken and acurl across the great corrugations of the near and middle distances of the ocean. Then they brought their gazes inboard again without saying anything about what they had looked for.

The child was sitting on the thwart still, and every little while he made those forth and back movements with his legs. They were sturdy little legs, John Carston noticed; he could remember when his own legs were like that, and to him that did not seem a great while ago either. And then he remembered his nurse, his father, his brother, his two sisters, and his mother—especially his mother. In fact, he had thought of her a great deal since he had been in the boat, for it seemed that she was very near him now, despite the half-world which separated him from his home. He thought it must be because death was so close that he felt so near her, and yet she herself was living. He had received a letter from her when he was in Sydney, not two months ago, though it seemed longer, and then there was another for him at Suva. But neither was with him now, for they had gone down with the schooner.

"It was hard luck losing the schooner," he said.

"It was harder luck the others losing their lives," said the mate.

"The sea is terribly cruel," said the woman.

"Ay," nodded the mate. "It's done some cruel things, but not so cruel as man has done, and man has brains to know better."

By now the sun had passed its meridian and its slanting rays crept in under one side of the awning, which nowhere came down to less than a couple of feet above the gunwale of the dinghy. The supercargo could feel its heat burning into his back, and one of his hands, on the gunwale of the boat and moist with sweat, smarted under the scalding warmth. Withdrawing this hand presently, he crept forward from under the awning and tried to stand on the thwart where the mate had stood, but he had not the control of his muscles nor the subconscious knowledge of the sea's movements to remain balanced there, and he dropped back on to the floor of the boat, where he stood with his legs astride.

"There's something over there!" he said. "Looks like a bit of a breeze."

"Sure it isn't a cloud again?" asked the mate.

"Certain," said the supercargo.

The mate rose and went to have a look too. But he stood on the thwart and was thus raised almost a yard higher than the supercargo.

"Where did you think you saw it?" asked the mate.

"Over there," said the supercargo, pointing.

"I see," said the mate. "You've got good eyes. It's a bit of a breeze too, by golly!"

"You'll want the sail again?" said the woman.

"We'll wait to make sure the breeze is worth hoisting to," said the mate.

He waited on the thwart, and the supercargo waited standing on the bottom of the dinghy in front of him and sideways on to him. The mate perforce had to stand on the thwart facing the stern, but his head was turned and the sinews and muscles of his bare neck showed under a skin the colour of mahogany. There was strength in him, and the supercargo found himself admiring this strength and wishing that he had it too. He did not think he was a strong man himself.

"She's coming near now," said the mate. "But it's not very strong. See, there's not much white water anywhere."

"Well, we don't want it too strong," said the supercargo.

"No," said the mate.

Before the oncoming puff of lazy wind the silky swell was beginning to crinkle into small corrugations which yet had smaller ones upon them. Millions of tiny waves appeared, all dancing gleefully one before the other as if they took joy in the life that had been begotten for them by the lazy wind. In a little while they were slapping and gurgling against the hull of the clinker-built dinghy as it rose and sank on the greater waves of the swell.

"It looks as if there's going to be just the sort of breeze we want here," said the mate. "I wouldn't say it's going to die down again in a hurry. See, there's bits of combers on the swell."

"Yes," said the supercargo.

You could now hear the broken water swishing and sighing through the silence that shrouded the sea. It was as if the old ocean had first stirred in its slumbers, and then awakened. There was vast activity in it and a sort of forlorn beauty, but no wildness.

"Well, you'll want the sail now," said the woman.

The mate did not answer immediately. The supercargo looked at him in a questioning, dependent sort of way. He might have been master of the cargo, he might now be master of the drinking water, but the mate was the real master of the boat.

"Well, I don't know," said the mate, "that there's much sense in setting the sail now the wind has come. You see, we haven't got any centreboard to tack at all and there's nothing to do but run before it, and it's not blowing toward land."

"No," said the supercargo.

"And then," said the mate, "if we run before it maybe we'll only be running away from some ship that'll fetch up over the horizon. I think the best thing we can do is to make a bit of a sea-anchor out of that strip of spare canvas in the bow, and ride head on to it. Till night comes, anyway," he added.

"That'd be a good idea," agreed the supercargo.

"I'll make the sea-anchor, then," said the mate.

When he had the canvas cut with his pocket-knife into two oblong shapes so that he could make a sack, he was in a dilemma as to how to sew them together, for he had neither thread nor needle. Nails, he said, would do, or pins.

The supercargo looked at the woman. "Hairpins——" he began.

She gave him some to take forward to the mate. They were forced through the canvas, bent and hooked so they would hold, and the sea-anchor was made save for the hoop of iron, which was to hold it open so it would fill with water as it dragged through the sea, holding the boat's head to the waves.

"I can cut up a bit of the kerosene tin to make a hoop," said the mate.

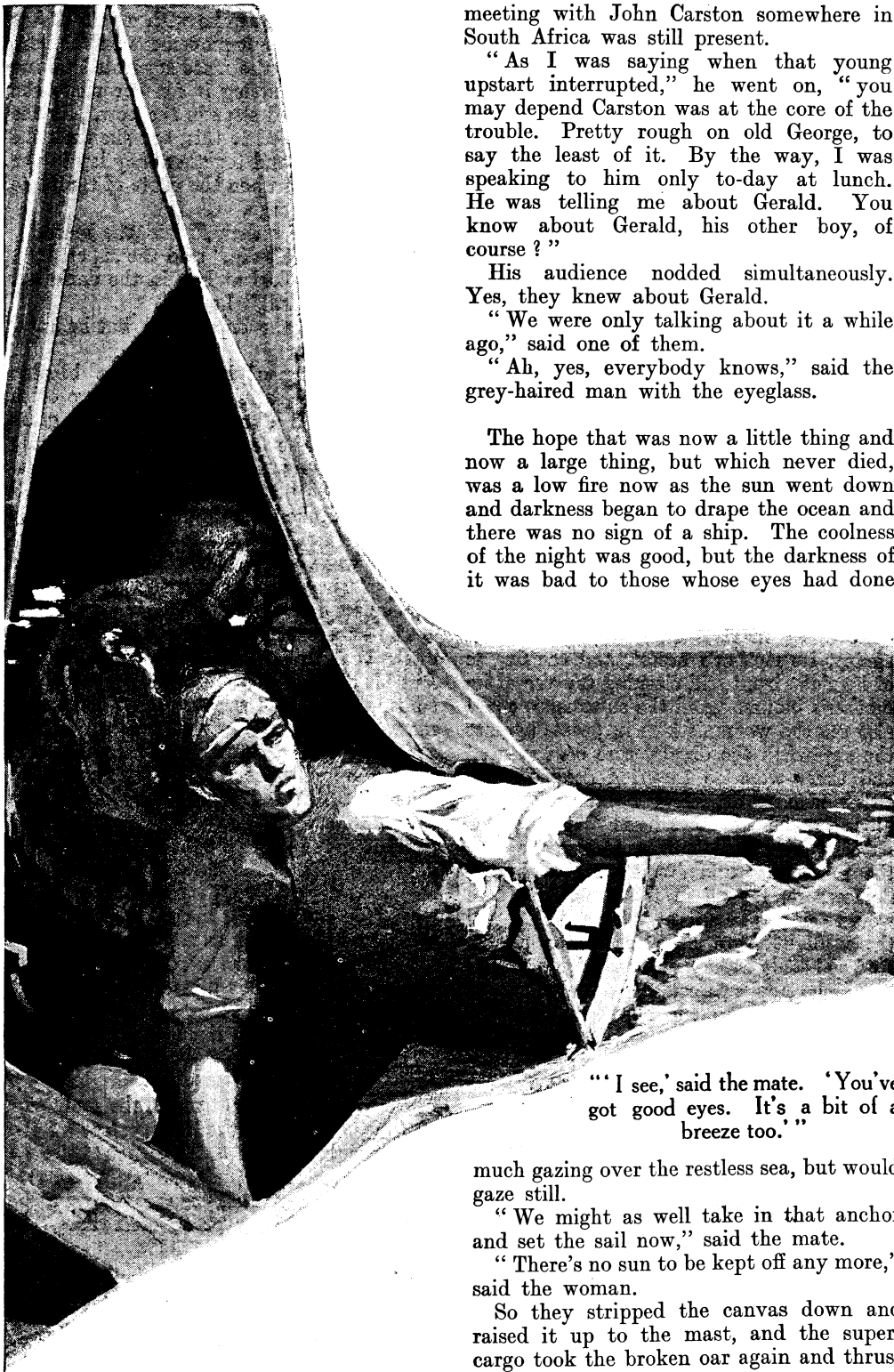
When this was done and the sea-anchor fastened to a length of rope and thrown overboard from the bow, the dinghy came gradually round to the swell and remained thus. The mate and the supercargo returned to their seats under the awning, and only left them periodically to stand on the thwart and gaze round the horizon in search of a ship.

"Gosh," said the mate. "I could do another drink. But I expect we'd better hang on as long as we can. Any water in that other keg still?"

"Yes," said Carston.

There was no longer the voice of the brook beside the roar of Niagara Falls—the young cynic with the clipped moustache had wearied of his solitary defence and departed. But the man with the grey hair, the eyeglass, and the tale of his son's friend's





"'I see,' said the mate. 'You've got good eyes. It's a bit of a breeze too.'"

meeting with John Carston somewhere in South Africa was still present.

"As I was saying when that young upstart interrupted," he went on, "you may depend Carston was at the core of the trouble. Pretty rough on old George, to say the least of it. By the way, I was speaking to him only to-day at lunch. He was telling me about Gerald. You know about Gerald, his other boy, of course?"

His audience nodded simultaneously. Yes, they knew about Gerald.

"We were only talking about it a while ago," said one of them.

"Ah, yes, everybody knows," said the grey-haired man with the eyeglass.

The hope that was now a little thing and now a large thing, but which never died, was a low fire now as the sun went down and darkness began to drape the ocean and there was no sign of a ship. The coolness of the night was good, but the darkness of it was bad to those whose eyes had done much gazing over the restless sea, but would gaze still.

"We might as well take in that anchor and set the sail now," said the mate.

"There's no sun to be kept off any more," said the woman.

So they stripped the canvas down and raised it up to the mast, and the supercargo took the broken oar again and thrust it over the stern.

"The weather's hauled round. Let her run down-wind," said the mate.

The dinghy came round and faced away from the breeze, and the sail, bulging taut, bore her away over the swell, trailing phosphorescent light through the water. Against her hull the little waves still slapped and gurgled and crunched, and every now and again there sounded off in the darkness the swish of a breaking wave. Sometimes, not often, drops of this broken water splashed inboard and the coolness of them was balm to the skin that had endured the heat of the day.

"It would be good," said the supercargo, "to take a dip overside, wouldn't it?"

"I wouldn't like to be so generous to the sharks," said the mate.

"How big is a shark?" asked the drowsing child in its mother's arms.

"Not very big," said the kindly mate. "And they wouldn't hurt little chaps like you."

The child was sound asleep in a little while. The stars gave off a pale light, and John Carston could vaguely make out the little figure in its mother's arms, its face against its mother's breast, and the fingers of its right hand still clasping the vee of its mother's blouse. And the supercargo could also see the woman's face in profile against the sky when the dinghy rose on the swell and there were no towering dark hills to either side of it. And he murmured to himself: "They must live!"

Every now and again, as during the day, the mate rose and stood on the thwart. Somewhere, far off in the darkness, there would perhaps be a light, even as in the day there might have been smoke or a sail. And as keenly as he had looked for smoke or a sail, he now scanned the sombre horizon for a light. But all he saw were the stars sprinkled down to the sea where they were drowned.

"How would you know a light from a star?" asked the woman, and her voice was more tired than ever now.

"I know every star in the sky," said the mate. "And anyway, a light is different. First there'd be the white one at the mast, and then the green of starboard or red of port showing below. No, there'd be no mistake about it being a star."

The woman spoke no more. The supercargo had arranged his coat and the mate's in the stern of the dinghy, so that she could lean back in a greater degree of comfort against the locker. Every little while she nodded and came awake with a jerk of her head at some abrupt movement on the part of the boat, and the mate suggested taking the child and nursing it for her while she went forward and slept in the bow. In the end, she consented to this, but she took the child with her, and together they lay in the bow of the boat upon the coats of the mate and the supercargo.

"It's hard for them," said the mate.

"They mustn't die," said the supercargo.

The mate looked at him in the darkness. "None of us will," he said.

"No," said the supercargo, but he knew the mate lied.

The swishing of broken waves became now a little more frequent, and more often spray splashed aboard, but not in great quantities. The boat rode lightly, lifting easily and sweeping onward before the pressure of the sail. The mate said he would take the broken oar and steer now while the supercargo had a sleep.

"I'll wake you a bit after midnight," he said. "Then you can steer till dawn, while I sleep."

The supercargo lay down in the bottom of the boat, and he was not long in sleeping. But his slumber was broken twice by spray smiting his cheek, for he lay where it boarded most, and for intervals of five minutes or so he remained awake. The hull of the dinghy was to either side of him, and he could not see the swell that way, but sometimes he saw it towering astern, and he could see the stars and the great purple heaven overhead. This came down astern also, and when the stern of the dinghy was flung high on the swell he could see the figure of the mate, seeming as if he were rising to heaven, blotting out some of the stars. Then his own eyelids blotted out the stars.

The mate woke him as agreed after midnight, and the mate lay down whence the supercargo had risen to take the steering oar. The supercargo now sat in the place of the mate, and wondered if the mate saw him rising up with the lifting stern of the boat and blotting out the stars. Once he spoke to see if the mate were awake, and he was answered. The second time he spoke, half an hour or so afterwards, the mate was silent.

The supercargo had been aware for some moments now that the breeze was gradually but surely easing down; occasionally a little extra puff came after a comparative calm, but each puff was never as hard as the one that had preceded it. And later the

calm spells came in earnest, so that the sail drooped often at the mast. And then a time came when there was no more wind, and when there was no figure rising with the lifting stern and blotting out the stars.

Dawn was paling the stars when the mate awoke. He noticed the slack sail, and knew there was no more wind. Then as he lifted his head his glance strayed forward, and he saw the woman stirring where she had been sleeping in the bow of the boat just across the thwart from him and so near that he heard her sigh as returning consciousness brought back to her the pain of knowledge. But when the mate looked astern, he saw no figure that stirred or sighed or that rose with the lifting stern to blot out the paling stars.

He swore a little, but never let his oaths reach the woman's ears or the ears of the child now waking. He rose and he took the broken oar that had been laid inboard; and then he lowered the oar as he looked at the drooping, useless sail.

The woman was still seated in the bow of the boat, but the child was standing up, looking round with a question on his lips. The woman did not need to ask any questions, for, like the mate, she knew.

"There wasn't enough water," the mate said. "I ought to have guessed it and been on the look-out. Well, there's all the more left to drink now." He spoke in a curious, gruff tone.

The woman looked overside at the sea. She did not speak.

In a little while the child asked for a drink, and the mate opened the locker. He turned on the tap of one jar, but no water ran out, and then he turned on the tap of the other. After he had handed the pannikin to the child, he had a look at the jar that was empty.

"And I might have guessed that too," he said.

There was a question in the woman's eyes now, as there was a question on the child's lips.

"There's a big junk of it chipped out, you see," said the mate, turning the jar round. "It couldn't have held any water at all, and that poor devil's been gammoning to drink out of it so there'd be more water for us!"

The question went out of the woman's eyes, for again knowledge came to her. But there were tears in her eyes, though there were none in the eyes of the mate, for something more bitter than sentiment had come to him. Something more bitter and yet something more glad, something that was ironical and something that was hope's fulfilment.

"It might have come before!" he said.

He meant a ship that was visible now, through the grey of dawn.

"Yes," said the woman, looking at the sail. "Yes, it might have come before and saved him."

"There's some things a man can never understand," said the mate. "But we're saved at any rate, and I'm glad for the sake of you and the kiddy, though I'm sorry for him that's been taken."

The distant ship, a barquentine, had sighted them, and because there was no wind to drive her she put off a boat. While it crept slowly over the hills and valleys of the sea, the sun rose and made more white the sails of the becalmed vessel, so that she looked like a gull against the blue beyond.

And as the sun rose, the child gave utterance to his question: "Mummy, is Mr. John Carston with God?"

"Yes, dear," said the woman slowly, "he is surely with God!"

"Ay!" said the mate, and bowed and bared his head.

"Yes, everybody knows," repeated the grey-haired man with the eyeglass. "And I'm dashed sorry for poor old Carston."

"Oh, well," said one of the two rather portly men, "it isn't a thing to make such a fuss over, is it? What I mean, we all went the pace for a while, didn't we?"

"Quite so," said the elderly man with the eyeglass. "But you know what hopes poor old Carston had of Gerald, and it will be a great pity if he goes irrevocably to the devil like his brother John . . ."

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS PIERCED HIS SIDE.

RUST are the Roman spears that were
Bright palisades from sea to sea;
And dust the last proud signifer
A thousand years and more is he.
But shred of pot and paving-stone
Witness where Cæsar's might was hurled;
And one red-thrusted spear alone
Still leaves its mark upon the world.

A. NEWBERRY CHOYCE.



EASTER—AND AFTER.

NURSE: Are you the lady who was with the patient in the car when it went into the ditch?

VISITOR: Yes. I thought it would be only fair to come and give him the kiss he was trying to take then!

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

THE FASHIONS OF ARCADY.

By Louis Mellard.

WE get the spring-kick for new clothes at Mudham Magna as soon as you folks in town. Although we are five miles from the nearest railway, and two and a half from the yellow motor-bus (if it happens to stop at the hill-top), we know pretty quickly what's going to be worn this season and what isn't. Especially what isn't.

The landlady of the "Blue Moon" starts the colour-scheme for the ladies, and Mrs. Jimmins, our blacksmith-undertaker's wife, finishes it. At any rate, she tries to put the lid on it by always wearing black. This would-be-restraining influence, however, is knocked out by Farmer Haylad's second wife, who, formerly in service with a sporting Leicester squire, knows something about hats and bonnets, and how to juggle with racing colours.

After Easter, the landscape gets brightened up a bit by Mrs. H. on Sunday evenings, when she goes to church while her husband goes to sleep. From Easter to Whitsun she gives us at least five quick-change hats; and from behind curtains one half of our village watches her sail in, then, later, from the "Blue Moon" bar parlour, the other half sees her come out. Last year an artist fellow came to Mudham Magna for a month's painting. He stayed four days. The last day was a Sunday.

Our younger men's fashions are guided and led to the slaughter by Young Spanner, the plumber, who is courting the red-haired girl at the Post Office, where she runs a clothing club. One or two members have re-named it the Fleecing Club. Here, at the time of writing, there is on the counter, twelve inches from the Post Office proper, a display of yellow ties and yellower boots that will play the very dickens with the flower-show in June; and four inches from a side of bacon swing two pairs of Oxfords that were not fully subscribed for last year by a

young cowman who went one day to town to buy the Fishing Club prizes and was never seen again.

Also one of Spanner's sensational sports coats with six useless pockets and a cross-word puzzle design of black and red spots on squares of pale green. Last spring our assistant organist bought one like it. He only wore it once. If he had worn it a second time his young lady would have broken off the engagement. And she has money. What she said about the red-haired girl at the Post Office is still quoted at all our social gatherings not patronised by Spanner.

I know one man in our village who would like that coat, and if only he would deliver my morning letters and newspapers in the mornings instead of the early evenings I would buy it for him. Still, he has more than a sufficiency of clothes, has Whottle, our postman and news-agent. He is a man of parts, is Whottle.

Some days he wears the khaki tunic of his Army service; some days he dons the official striped trousers of his present office, adding variety either by a Salvation Army jersey or the official red waistcoat of our Brass Band, of which he is the drummist. On wet days he flounders through the village in the jack-boots of the Fire Brigade; and I am dying to see him come up



PROGRESS.

AUNT DOROTHY (to little nephew who has been at school for one week): Well, Dick, what have you learned at school?

DICK (after thoughtful pause): Well—I know that two and two is something.

my garden path some sweltering afternoon this summer in the thin helmet of that, as yet, untried organisation. This week he is wearing the peak-cap of the St. John's Ambulance, which gives rather a note of distinction to a pair of once grey flannels stuffed inside cycling stockings of two violently opposite patterns.

His grandfather, our oldest inhabitant but two, is not quite so dressy as he is said to have been in his hunting-stable days; but he always opens the spring by sitting on his doorstep in the undersized, pale brown bowler he bought in 1846. Of course, if he should be invited to a wedding or a funeral this season he will discard this, temporarily, for the tall hat of *his* grandfather.

It holds more cake.



HANDICAPPED.

EASTER VISITOR (arriving): Now, *why* didn't I bring my plus-fours?

VISITOR: Is that the oldest inhabitant?

NATIVE: No, we ain't got one now; he died last year.

QUITE ACCOUNTABLE.

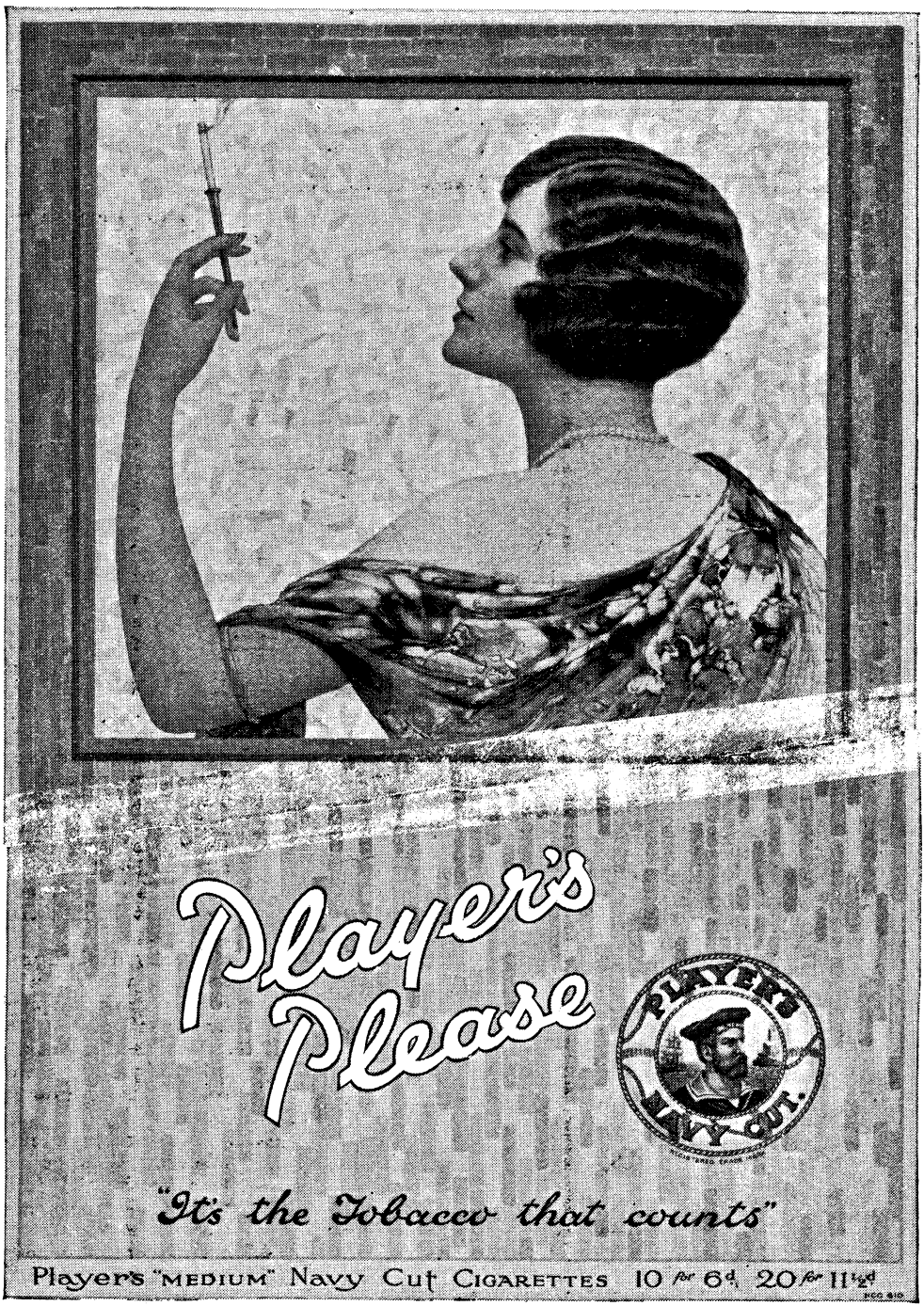
Oh, why do I feel in a capital humour?
So thoroughly full of the glory of joy?
Untroubled by any political rumour
That once on a time used to fret and annoy?
I look on the world through a halo of gladness;
I say to the grouser: "Cheer up, and be gay!"
And homeward I go with no feeling of sadness
When leisure is mine at the end of the day.

The prospects of peace that of late were uncertain
(I speak in the purely domestical sense)
Have brightened a lot, for the sitting-room curtain
Is back in its place: the relief is immense.
The whitewash is gone, that once flavoured our bacon,
The carpets are down, and my lady has won
The kindness by which she was wholly forsaken
Until the last bit of spring-cleaning was done.

John Lea.

"WAITER, I have waited half an hour for a small steak."

"Just think how long you would have had to wait if you had ordered a big one."


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A MOVING DIARY.

By Ada Leonora Harris.

5.45 a.m. Wake up about two hours before usual time with a vague impression of something unpleasant about to happen. Remember that it is the day of our "move." Suppose one ought to be thankful to have a house to move into. Regret to say gratitude is not prevailing emotion.

7.45. Breakfast in kitchen. Extremely scrappy. One egg, half a rasher, and dregs of pot of marmalade between two. Vera (my wife), keeps consulting list, made on lid of shoe-box, of things to be specially remembered, such as:

Don't forget garden roller.
Flat irons packed in drawing-room coal scuttle.
Silver teapot, ditto spoons in hat-box, etc., etc.

10.30. Pantechnicon arrives with crew of six in green baize aprons, who, having finished smoking pipes, begin to roll up sleeves.

10.45. Sleeves rolled up. Move commences.

11.10. Dining-room suite, displayed on front lawn, looks surprisingly shabby. One arm-chair, taking advantage of slit in leather, allows stuffing to protrude in most indecent manner.

11.35. Vera bursts in on me, and demands: "Where's the beef-steak pudding?" Inquire her meaning. She replies that she thought it would be nice to have a hot meal in the old home before starting. So has made beef-steak pudding as a little surprise, and left it on gas stove in saucepan. Pudding has disappeared. Inquire humorously if it has opened lid and hopped out. Humour not appreciated. Pudding has vanished in company with saucepan. Ordered not to stand staring there, but to go and see into the matter. On Inquiry, am informed by one of the men that a saucepan answering to description has been packed, man can't exactly recall where. But feels sure it will turn up, pudding and all, at the other end, and be as good as ever when warmed up. Consequently, last meal in old home consists of bread and rind of cheese and stray jam spread with ivory paper-knife.

1 p.m. Beer fetched. Men retire to interior of half-packed van, and consume leisurely lunch.

1.30. Suddenly remember Twinky, our cat. Call him gently and persuasively. Then loudly and angrily. No effect.

2.5. Move recommences. Twinky discovered to have climbed tallest pear-tree. On being entreated to descend and allow himself to be packed in hamper, indicates that he isn't taking any.

2.25. Twinky dislodged, swearing volubly, with aid of clothes-prop. Move continues.

3.45. Vera decides that the safest way to dispose of best hat is to wear it. Does so.

4.10. Van starts for new address. Vera and I take sentimental farewell of old home, and start for station.

4.35. Arrive at new home to find charlady awaiting us in rather hilarious condition. Vera takes off best hat and deposits it in cupboard out of the dust.



THAT BABY AGAIN.

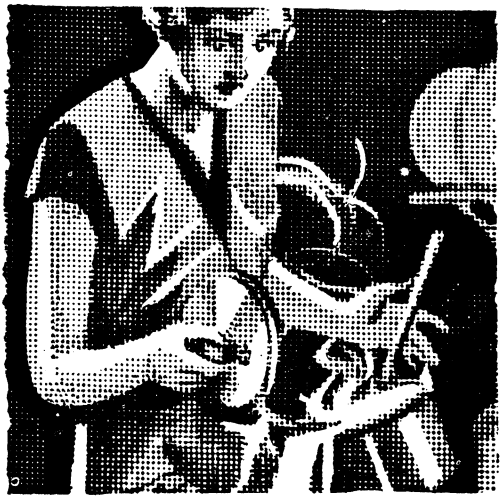
MOTORIST: Half a gallon of petrol, please?

URCHIN: Hey, Bill—'ere's another bloke on one of them world tours!

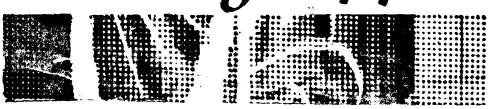
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LORD CHESTERFIELD in a letter to his son wrote—**"Advice is seldom welcome; and those who want it the most, always like it the least."**

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5.15. Pantechnicon arrives. Symptoms of hilarity also observable in one or two of crew who admit having stopped for tea on the way.

6.30. With assistance of charlady several heavy articles of furniture have been carefully placed in wrong positions. Twinky escapes from hamper and climbs several fences in back gardens before being run to earth and shut in cellar—feet having been anointed with margarine.

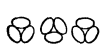
7.30. Saucepan which contained steak pudding discovered. Said saucepan contains pudding basin and cloth, also string with which it was tied. Pudding has apparently mislaid itself en route.

8.10. Vera's hat discovered beneath volumes of Encyclopædia which have been dumped on top. Only mangled corpse finally disinterred from literary mausoleum.

8.25. Additional discovery of fact that we have musical neighbour in adjoining house who gives lessons on 'cello.

9.35. Pantechnicon and crew depart. Also charlady, who has several times been discovered taking forty winks in odd corners. Twinky released from cellar and propitiated with sardines—tin having been opened with hammer and chisel.

10.30. Retire to rest between blankets, sheets not forthcoming, so dead tired ~~that~~ not even what sounds like "Dead March" in "Saul" on 'cello can prevent slumber ensuing very shortly.



ADVANCE agents of musical shows are usually careful to ascertain the peculiarities, the merits, and demerits of the theatres and halls they are to exhibit in, for the benefit of the performers when they arrive. One of these agents, having hired a hall in a Kentucky town, asked the proprietor of the building:

"How are the acoustics of your hall?"

"The which?" said the Kentuckian.

"The acoustics."

"Well, I'll tell you," said the proprietor, looking a little puzzled. "Thar was a minstrel comp'ny 'long here 'bout two weeks ago that stole 'bout everything they could lay their hands on, so mebbe they're missin'."

WORDSWORTH CONTINUED.

"A primrose by a river's brim
A yellow primrose was to him,
And it was nothing more."

And when he heard the cuckoo's note
Unto the papers never wrote;
He thought it was a bore.

To view the summer sunset red
He wouldn't even turn his head;
He'd seen it all before.

Bright moonbeams shining from afar,
The planet Mars, the evening star,
He'd pointedly ignore.

And when the nightingale he heard,
He'd merely say, "Oh, drat that bird!"
And go and shut the door.

R. H. Roberts.



A DELEGATION had called on Blivins to ask him to serve on the house committee of the country club.

"Gentlemen," said Blivins, "I thank you from the bottom of my heart for the honour which you wish to confer on me, but there is absolutely nothing doing. I have a wife, a son-in-law, and a second-hand car, and I think that is trouble enough for one man."



A SAVILE ROW TRAGEDY.

The man who asked for the ready-to-wear department.

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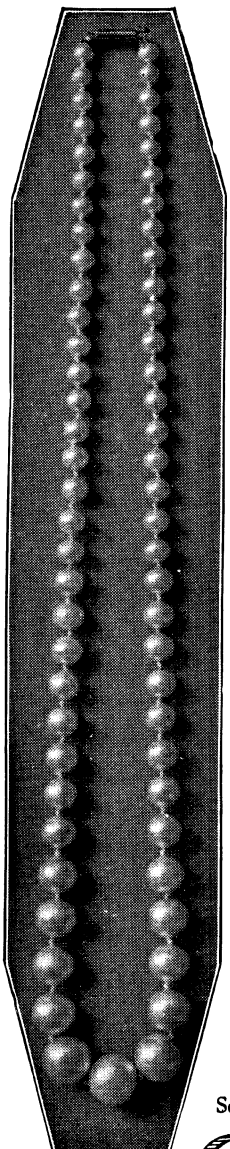
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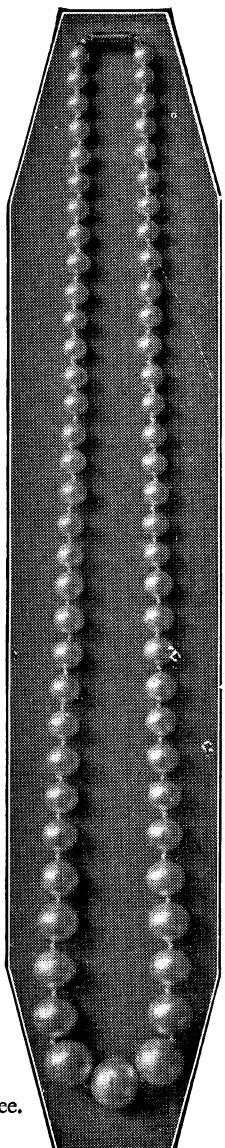


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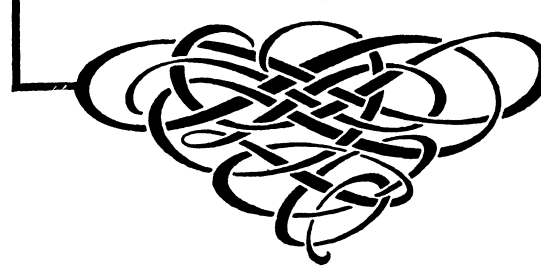
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"Lady Cleeve was pulling at the knots by which a rope hanging down the shaft was fastened." (*See page* 671.)



"Reggie saw the wine bottle was empty. He smelt it."

THE PICNIC

By H. C. BAILEY

ILLUSTRATED BY JOHN CAMPBELL

We have pleasure in publishing the first of a new series of the "Mr. Fortune" stories which proved so popular in "THE WINDSOR" last year. The earlier series can now be obtained in book form under the title "Mr. Fortune Speaking."

THE Cleeve case came to Mr. Fortune in his Kentish garden: which was the one piece of luck. It is his habit to be there when he can find an excuse. The ingenious brains which were at work in the case could not know that certain new sweet-peas of his breeding were about to flower. So after the local doctor rang up from the cottage hospital to ask if Mr. Fortune was at home, only ten minutes passed before Mr. Fortune was looking at the Hon. Julian Wray. There might have been hours.

Julian Wray was not a pleasant sight. He lay unconscious. His face was livid and bruised and a swollen lip oozed blood. He breathed noisily.

The doctor expounded. Mr. Wray had

been found by a farmer lying in the Abbey meadow. There was no one else in sight. But the injuries seemed to be fresh. The doctor was afraid the skull was fractured: a very grave lesion: he was anxious to have Mr. Fortune's opinion about an operation. . . .

"No. I don't think so." Reggie turned away from the bed. "No. He has a chance. Quite a good chance." But he looked at the doctor with plaintive inquiring eyes.

"I am so glad to have your opinion," said the doctor nervously. "Would you say it was an accident—a fall?"

"He fell all right. On his face. But not accidental. Blow from left rear by a heavy, blunt instrument."

"I was afraid it might be something like that. An assault, then?"

"Oh, yes. Yes. Did you notice anything else?"

"I couldn't say—I don't know that I did."

"Why did they try to chloroform him?" said Reggie. He gazed pathetically at the doctor. "Well, well. We want a little local colour. I'll have to visit the scene of the crime."

As he reached the hall of the hospital a car drew up and the Inspector of Police from Wembury came out of it. "Hallo, Mr. Fortune! Are you on this job, sir? How did you find Mr. Wray?"

Reggie told him. "Oh, lord, I was hoping he'd be able to tell us something."

"I wonder." Reggie climbed into his car. "Let's go and see what he was doing in the Abbey meadow."

"He was on a picnic, sir."

"Very sociable of him," Reggie murmured. "I seldom get sandbagged on a picnic myself. Why did the company lay him out? Had he left the lunch behind?"

"There wasn't any company. It's like this, sir—I suppose you know who Mr. Wray is? He's the brother of the Earl of Cleeve up at Stourham House. He was taking his nephew, Viscount Stourham, for a day on the river. They were going to picnic in the Abbey meadow——"

"Viscount Stourham?" Reggie cried. "That's the little boy. Oh! There was a child in it."

"Yes, sir. Viscount Stourham is only seven. He was with Mr. Wray. That was the first thing the Earl of Cleeve said to me over the telephone when I told him about Mr. Wray. 'But Peter was with him,' he said; 'where is Peter?' Of course I didn't know, sir. There wasn't anybody to be seen in the meadow when Mr. Wray was found."

"No. There wouldn't be," Reggie muttered. His face was set.

"I sent all my men out to work along the river. But it's a nasty, queer business to my mind. This young Viscount he's the heir and the only child too; the Earl not having any yet by his second wife. Next to him would come Mr. Wray, if he lives."

The Abbey meadow is a broad strip of pasture by the river. Grey ruins, in which wallflowers grow and toadflax and stonecrop, rise from the turf amid a scattered company of ancient gnarled hawthorn trees.

The river lies under a high bank from which clumps of iris stretch out into the stream. Among the lances of golden bloom a sculling boat lay with her bows aground. There was nothing in her but sculls and boathook and a bundle of bathing things. Reggie turned away, and, staring at the ground, moved slowly across the rough grass. "Both of 'em landed here, sir." The Inspector came after him. "There's a child's footmarks in the mud as well as a man's."

"Thank you. I did notice it," Reggie murmured. "They also came along here together. Desirin' to have lunch in the shade." He stopped. Under one of the thorn trees stood a luncheon basket. The grass was much beaten down. He opened the basket. "Yes: lunch consumed. And then?" He moved to and fro, he picked up two pieces of a briar pipe. "Wray lit his pipe. He'd just begun to smoke when it got smashed. Yes. That would be the attempt to chloroform him."

"Chloroform!" the Inspector cried. "The doctor didn't say anything about that."

"No. No. Only a slight indication. They didn't bring it off with him. Probably worked all right with the child." Reggie moved about. "Lot of trampling. Looks like a struggle—breakin' away—yes"—he stopped by a long patch of bent grass—"that's where they finished with Wray. He lay there—and bled. Not very far from the lane." And into the lane Reggie went. "Not many cars come along here. There's been one just lately. Came from the other end. That's from the Dover road, what? Turned by the gate there. Stood under the hedge. Some time. Went back the same way." He frowned at the

wheel marks. "The top broke that elder bough. It was a closed car, big car. But it would be. There isn't much."

"I should say not. What's the use of looking for a big closed car? Hundreds of 'em on every road. And they've got clean off with the boy."

Reggie gazed at him with sad, wondering eyes. "Yes, I was thinking of that, you know," he said plaintively, and wandered away. "Several fellows came out of the car, and then?"

To and fro in the meadow he moved, working it like a dog after game, and the Inspector fumed at his heels.

He came to a hollow along the hawthorns, where the grass was flattened and crumbs lay about.

"They had lunch here, eh?" the Inspector said. "Pretty well hidden they'd be."

Reggie did not answer. He was on his hands and knees picking up crumbs. He rose with a small collection on a sheet of paper and rather diffidently offered it to the Inspector. "Thanks. I saw it was bread and cheese," the Inspector snorted. "What about it?"

Reggie put the crumbs in an envelope and the envelope in his pocket-book and wandered to and fro, gazing at the ground with dreamy, wistful eyes. "Look here, sir, I must get on. We're doing nothing here."

Reggie stooped and picked up something else, looked at it carefully and went on, paused by a patch of nettles and raked out of that with his foot a wine bottle. It had no label. He held it up to the light and saw it empty. He smelt it. And then he called out to the Inspector, "Come on," and ran back to the car.

"What have you got, sir?" The Inspector jumped in after him.

"Has the village policeman a telephone?" asked Reggie, and the car shot into reckless speed down a lane it filled.

"Now then"—they were shut in the policeman's stuffy sitting-room. "Ring up the police at Dover and ask 'em if there is a Greek ship in harbour."

The Inspector talked to the telephone and turned again to Reggie with a new respect. "That's right, sir. Greek ship came in three days ago, a tramp, *Apate*, still there doing repairs to engines."

"Tell 'em they must get aboard quick and search her for Viscount Stourham."

"Search her, sir?" the Inspector gasped.

"Drat it, man, they'll be off with him while you chatter. They've had too much time already. Give me the 'phone." Reggie snatched it. "Dover Police? Right. Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department speaking. Search that Greek ship for Viscount Stourham. Small boy. Go right through her. Inspector Grampound will give you his description. Go on, Inspector." And the scared Inspector, taking the receiver again, said Viscount Stourham had been kidnapped: boy of seven years old, fair hair, blue eyes, fresh complexion, small for his age, dressed in grey flannel. "Tell 'em to get on it quick," Reggie prompted. "If the boy's not on board yet, the ship must be watched. They should look out in Dover for a big closed car, possibly several men, some Greek sailors. That'll do."

The Inspector hung up the receiver and wiped his face. "That'll do!" he repeated. "I hope to goodness I've done right backing you, Mr. Fortune. You do take a bit on yourself. What if these chaps at Dover ring up Scotland Yard?"

But Reggie was already asking for that number. "Mr. Lomas, please. Fortune speaking. Oh, Superintendent Bell, then. Hallo, Bell. Mr. Lomas gone into the country? Oh, about the Earl of Cleeve's son? Splendid. I'm on that myself. Well, Mr. Lomas has instructed the Dover police to search a Greek tramp in Dover Harbour. What? No, I haven't seen him. But those are his orders. I'm telling him so, when we meet. If the Dover people ring you up, say they're to get on with it instead of askin' silly questions. Good-bye." He turned to the Inspector. "Had you told Scotland Yard you wanted help?"

"No, sir, not yet we shouldn't. None of our people but me knows what's happened."

"It was Lord Cleeve, then. Callin' on the higher powers very quick." Reggie contemplated the Inspector dreamily—"That's not without interest."

"Well, sir, I don't know. His lordship would be doing everything to find the boy. I reckon he got on to Scotland Yard at once and told 'em his son was kidnapped."

"Yes. That is indicated," Reggie murmured. "Well, well. I wish you'd look about among the people down here and find out if anybody saw that car, or came across any foreigners in these parts lately."

"Very good, sir." The Inspector was revived at the thought of action. "I'll see about it. But it's like magic to me. I don't know how you got on to that Greek ship."

"Not magic. No." Reggie smiled.

"Only the sense of smell. And takin' one thing with another. I showed you the bread and cheese."

"It beats me." The Inspector breathed hard. "What is there Greek about bread and cheese?"

"Nothing distinctive. No. But it was goat's-milk cheese. That didn't say Greek, but it made a foreign atmosphere. Then there was this." He took out of his pocket-book a small fruit stone. "Suggestive, isn't it?"

"Looks like a little plum stone to me." The Inspector stared at him.

"Oh, not plum. No. An olive stone. There were others. Strong flavour of the Mediterranean in the atmosphere. Finally, we have their wine bottle. Smell it."

The Inspector sniffed and did not like it. "Did you say wine, sir? More like turpentine, to my mind."

"Others have said so," Reggie smiled. "But it's wine all right. Greek wine. They put resin in it, you know. They say they like it."

"Good Heaven, sir," said the Inspector with disgust.

"Yes. A sad world. Well, we thus had a wholly Greek meal and a car that went off to Dover. The natural inference was a Greek ship in Dover Harbour. And there is one. Which verifies our theory."

"It's very clever, sir," the Inspector hesitated. "But why would Greeks want to kidnap the Earl of Cleeve's son?"

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. "The facts are not yet adequate. You go and look for some Greeks. I'm going home to tea."

But neither the anchovy sandwiches nor the cream horns of Elise interested him, and he turned away from the strawberries. It is a sign of great agitation of mind. In such a condition he has been compared by Mrs. Fortune to a plump terrier waiting sadly at a shut door.

The door opened and let in Lomas. Reggie jumped out of his chair. "Well, what about it? Have you heard from Dover?"

"Yes. I've just seen the Inspector here. Dover has telephoned him. They took Customs officers on board and rummaged this Greek ship. There was no child, there was nothing suspicious. I'd rather it hadn't been done, you know." Lomas frowned. "Just a little hasty, weren't you?"

Reggie's round face was drawn with anxiety and fear. "I say, they must watch her still, Lomas. You didn't stop that?"

"That's all right. I confirmed your instructions. They'll watch any communication with the shore. But I wish you'd confined yourself to that. I don't like these dashing irregularities."

"I had to be quick," Reggie said. "Don't you see? Time's everything. They might have got away with the child."

"Well, they haven't. And they won't—not in the *Apate*. If they try to put the child aboard her, we shall get him."

"Yes. I hope so," said Reggie drearily. He dropped into a chair and fumbled in his pockets. A cigar-case was at last found, a cigar was clumsily lit: in hours of anxious inaction his adroit hands are apt to make queer blunders. "I don't know if they will try now," he mumbled, and looked at Lomas with the plaintive appeal of a puzzled child.

"Losing confidence, eh?" Lomas smiled. "Not so sure about this Greek ship theory? Well, I thought it rather a wild guess myself."

"Oh, my hat!" Reggie groaned. "It wasn't a guess. Some fellows were hiding in that meadow this morning. They ate goat's-milk cheese and olives and drank that awful Greek wine with resin in it. They must have been Greeks, and in the way of getting Greek rations. They came in a car from Dover way and went back towards Dover. The only possible inference is they belong to a Greek ship in Dover Harbour. And there is a Greek ship there, and it came in with no business but to mend engines just a day or two ago. You have to believe it sent men to kidnap this child—or you've lost faith in the human reason." Reggie puffed at his badly burning cigar. "Perhaps you have."

"Not quite. Not yet," Lomas consoled him. "My dear fellow, this is brilliantly clever. But you push it rather far. What is the evidence after all? There were some people in that meadow some time lately making a foreign sort of meal. That doesn't prove they stole the child. And when we begin to act on your theory we get nothing. There is this Greek ship at Dover, but the child is not on board. The ship is well known in English harbours, a tramp in the regular trade, with respectable owners, a big firm, Castro & Castro. How can we go on believing that her crew were concerned in kidnapping the child? It is a wildly improbable idea in itself—a Greek ship coming round Dover and landing her crew to kidnap the son of an English peer!

What should Greeks want with him? What——?"

"Oh, my aunt!" Reggie moaned. "What are we talking about? We've got to find the boy, Lomas. Don't you see time's everything?"

"Quite. Quite. But I'm afraid we'll have to begin at the other end."

"The other end?" Reggie's voice rose, and he shuddered and started up. "What do you mean? Waiting till you've found him and workin' back? Waiting! You'll find nothing or find a corpse."

"Oh, my dear Reginald. Of course it's a cruel case, but you needn't be so emotional. These affairs of wealthy children being stolen are always a matter of money. The rascals want a price for the child, of course. We shall have an offer presently. Just a quiet commercial crime."

"Yes. It could be," Reggie murmured.

"What have you got in your head, Reginald? There is no rational purpose in carrying off the child to kill him. And who should want him killed? The only person to benefit by his death is Wray, who would become the heir to the title and estate. But Cleeve is young still and has a young wife. They might have half a dozen other children yet."

"Yes, I had thought of that," Reggie said. "Yes. Very obscure case. Many nasty motives possible. We can't stop to look for explanations. We have to get the child back from these fellows quick."

"Oh, I shouldn't worry, you know," said Lomas. "They'll want to return him in good condition. There's no money in cruelty to him."

Reggie looked at him with wondering eyes in which there was no admiration. "You talked about workin' from the other end. Did you happen to mean to do anything?"

"Oh, yes. I'm going up to Stourham Castle now. There are several things I want to know. It's curious the kidnappers should have been able to pick out the time when Wray had the boy alone on a picnic in this remote meadow. That's what I call the other end, Reginald."

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. "Lots of other ends. All right; I'll come."

Lord and Lady Cleeve were in the library together, and together they rose and came to shake hands. "Oh, but, Mr. Lomas, it is kind of you to come so quickly," she cried. "Do say you have some good news for us?"

Cleeve looked at her anxiously. "Dora—perhaps Mr. Lomas would rather speak to me alone."

"Oh, is there anything more—anything dreadful?" She put her hand to her throat.

"I've nothing worse to tell you than you know," Lomas said.

"Ah, let me stay, Bertie," She put both hands round her husband's arm. "I must hear what they think. My poor Peter!"

Cleeve looked down at her. He was head and shoulders the taller, a lean man of brown lined face and sombre eyes, weary and worldly wise against her simplicity. She had the fresh charm of a girl, though there were dark shadows under her eyes. She was so fair, so slight and dainty. She waved them into chairs, she pulled her husband down beside her on a sofa. "Please tell us! If we could only do something."

"The position is this. The boy has been kidnapped, but we have yet no information about the men concerned. Mr. Wray is too seriously injured to give an account of the affair. I want you to tell me if anything has ever occurred to make you fear an attempt on the child."

"But no—no." Lady Cleeve looked bewildered. "Nothing has ever happened, has it, Bertie? But how could it. Everybody simply loves Peter. They couldn't help it. He's an absolute darling, you know."

"Quite." Lomas looked at her sombre, silent husband. "No suspicions of any of the servants? No strangers been seen about the place?"

"I've not heard of any strangers," Cleeve said. "The servants are all right." He gave Lomas a queer look of defiance or mistrust.

"This is the point. I don't understand how the kidnappers knew they would find the boy alone in that remote place unless someone in the household gave them information."

"Oh, that's clever," Lady Cleeve cried. "But how horrible! Why should anyone want to hurt Peter?"

"About this picnic, then," Lomas went on placidly. "Does Mr. Wray often take the boy out for the day?"

Cleeve left his wife to answer. "Oh, no, indeed he doesn't. Mr. Wray is not here very much, is he, Bertie? But he is rather fond of having Peter to himself. He made quite a fuss of this river picnic. They've been talking about it for days. Oh, I wish, I wish——" She struggled not to cry.

"Yes. I see," Lomas said. "Almost everybody in the house would know of it."

"I dare say," Cleeve scowled. "Julian didn't keep it a secret, if that's what you mean."

"But—but can't you do something, Mr. Lomas?" his wife cried. "All this while they have Peter, they're taking him away from me, and we're just talking. Oh, there must be a way to find where they've gone with him!"

Cleeve stared at Lomas. "No clue at all, eh?" he growled.

"Well, Mr. Fortune has a theory," said Lomas. "Some indications have suggested to him that the boy was kidnapped by a party of Greek sailors."

"Greeks!" Lady Cleeve cried. Her blue eyes grew big, and she looked at her husband. "Oh, my dear!" she gasped. She was afraid.

For the first time Reggie spoke. "Yes. What exactly does that mean?" he said.

Lady Cleeve did not answer. She was fighting emotions as she watched her husband, and he too suffered. "It means my brother Julian has lived a good deal in Greece. I suppose you knew that?" He scowled at Reggie. "That's where you got your theory from."

"Oh, no. No. There were other facts," said Reggie blandly. "But, of course, he's the Wray who was excavatin' in Sparta. I didn't connect that. My error."

"Well, we spent a spring with him in Greece. You can connect that too," Cleeve growled.

"But Julian was frightfully hurt himself," Lady Cleeve said unsteadily. "I don't understand. What do you mean, Mr. Fortune?"

"I don't know. I don't understand either, Lady Cleeve."

"You're throwing suspicion on my brother," Cleeve said heavily. "Because he's the next heir he's made away with Peter. That's it, isn't it?"

"The next heir!" Lady Cleeve moaned. "Oh, Bertie, don't talk so. My poor Peter!"

"No, I'm not throwin' suspicion," Reggie said quietly. "I say the boy was kidnapped by Greeks; and Mr. Wray was nearly killed in the struggle. It don't occur to you some Greeks might have a grudge against Mr. Wray?"

"Oh, there!" Lady Cleeve cried faintly. "Bertie! That would be right, wouldn't it? That might be."

"I don't know why the rascals should be Greeks at all," said Cleeve sullenly.

"It's only a theory, I'm afraid," Lomas spoke to soothe him. "Mr. Fortune found the remnants of a Greek meal on the ground, and there's a Greek ship in Dover to-day. But the boy is not aboard her and she's being watched. He won't be removed that way."

"But then—but then—you don't really know anything!" Lady Cleeve cried. "The Greek ship hasn't got him. You haven't found any Greeks. The ship has nothing to do with it. And all the while some awful people are taking my Peter away. Oh!" She flung herself on her husband's shoulder. He was much embarrassed, muttered something to her, caressed her awkwardly and got free of her.

Flushed and ashamed of himself, he turned on Lomas. "It comes to this, you haven't traced him, and you've found nothing that's any use to work on."

"I wouldn't say that," Reggie murmured. "There's the ship, you know."

"I don't believe in it," Cleeve announced. "I can't believe any of this about Greeks and a Greek ship."

"No? Why can't you?" Reggie sat up.

"It's fantastic," Cleeve scowled. "I don't think you really believe it yourselves. Do you?"

"Oh, yes. Yes. Absolutely," said Reggie.

Lomas shrugged. "It's a theory. A possible theory."

"It's wildly improbable."

"You don't help us, you know," said Reggie sharply. "I thought you might help us to a motive."

"For a pack of Greek sailors making away with my son? Well, I can't, then. It's mad."

"For anybody making away with your son," said Reggie.

"I don't know of any motive for anybody," Cleeve growled.

"Oh, but what could there be?" his wife cried. "Peter—the child——"

"I should take it there's only one possible motive," said Lomas. "He's been stolen to make you pay for his recovery."

And after a moment, "I suppose so," Cleeve muttered.

"You agree?" said Reggie. "Well then, you'd better offer a reward. If you telephone to the Press Association that you'll pay a thousand pounds for the recovery of your son, Viscount Stourham, kidnapped



"' I've nothing worse to tell you than you know,' Lomas said."

to-day, all the papers will announce that to-morrow morning."

"You think that would do good?" Cleeve looked at Lomas.

"Oh, yes. Yes. It might do a lot of good," said Reggie. "Anyway—it's the next chance."

But Cleeve did not listen to him. "What do you say, Mr. Lomas?"

Lomas spread out his hands. "I'm not to advise it. We don't advise rewards in such cases. As Fortune has suggested it, I don't care to prevent you."

"The perfect official," Reggie chuckled. "He washes his hands of it, Lord Cleeve."

"You don't advise, and you don't prevent!" Cleeve said angrily. "It's the only hope, I suppose?" He looked at Lomas.

"No. I wouldn't say that," Reggie murmured. "The next chance. But we're keeping you. Information leadin' to recovery of Viscount Stourham. And give his description. I should say a thousand pounds."

"Thanks," said Cleeve angrily. "You're going, are you?"

Lomas said something civil and they went. "Not popular, are we?" Reggie murmured as they settled down in the car. "Takin' one thing with another, you'd better stay with me."

"As you're so pressing," Lomas smiled. The car ran on through orchards and hop-gardens shimmering in the yellow sunset light. "I'm afraid the Greeks are out of it, Reginald. I abstain from saying I told you so."

"Oh, no. No. The Greeks were in it all right."

Lomas looked at him. "This faith is beautiful. But I remark that you suggested a reward for further information."

"I wanted to see if Cleeve would put it in the papers. If he doesn't, that'll be rather interesting, Lomas."

"What do you mean? Of course he will. He was at the telephone before we were out of the house."

"Yes, I noticed that. Oh, yes, I think he will. Well, if he does, that may be interesting too."

"We shall get a mass of futile rumours," Lomas said gloomily. "A reward is always a nuisance."

"Not scientific, no," Reggie murmured. "But time's everything. We can't wait to be neat. This is a chance to break 'em up."

"Break them up?" Lomas echoed. "Where are we now, Reginald? Another theory?"

"Oh, no. Same theory. Growin' more complex. I thought it would. Very obscure case. I told you. What did you make of Cleeve and his wife?"

"Quite natural, weren't they? He was rather surly. Lots of men are when they're badly shaken. She's almost hysterical, poor thing."

"Yes. Marked contrast. Woman full of emotions. Man sullen. Woman talking voluble, all ejaculations. Man almost dumb, even when losing his temper."

"Yes. But great disturbance in both when I mentioned Greeks. Not so much surprise as alarm."

"Natural enough—it was Wray's connection with Greece horrified them."

"Yes, comin' back to my Greeks, aren't we? But they'd all been in Greece, you know."

"Good Gad! You don't suspect Cleeve himself?"

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. "I don't think Cleeve was quite frank, you know. And I think he's afraid."

"But, great heavens, why should Cleeve have his own son kidnapped?"

"I don't know," Reggie said slowly. "Quite a lot of things we don't know, Lomas." And the car turned into the gates of his house.

The Inspector was waiting for them. "Hallo, my friend." Lomas smiled. "Any news from Dover?"

"I've heard nothing from Dover, sir. But Mr. Fortune told me to look about for foreigners. Well, I think we've got 'em. I mean to say we've got evidence there were foreigners down there by the meadow to-day. It's like this, sir. The boy from the shop, he'd been up to Skindle's farm with their fresh yeast, and he was coming back through the meadows. He saw some men looking about, little dark men, he says, and one of 'em had ear-rings."

Lomas laughed. "So they must have been foreigners. Good!"

"Beg your pardon, sir," said the Inspector with dignity. "I hadn't finished. The boy says they were jabbering. He's sure it wasn't proper English. One of 'em kept saying something about 'Cleet hear us' and another was trying to shut him up. 'Them brass,' he said. Then they saw the boy and had a good look at him and he heard this, 'Them brass,' again."

Reggie smiled. "Yes. That boy's too good to be carrying yeast," he said.

"Good Gad!" said Lomas. "Do you pretend to recognise this language, Reginald?"

"Yes, I think so. One of them was afraid of 'Kleteras'—that's police. And another was telling him 'Them Birassi'—that means 'It don't matter.' In modern Greek, Lomas, old thing."

"Your game," said Lomas.

"Oh, no, no." Reggie's smile passed. "We're only toilin' after 'em. And they've got the child. What will they do with him when they're checked?"

"If we keep 'em off the ship, we shall get 'em in the end," said Lomas.

"In the end!" Reggie said. "Where will the child be by then?" He looked pathetically at Lomas. "Well, well, I suppose I can eat. Can you? We'd better try."

Lomas had no difficulty, and Reggie in an absent abnormal manner made something of a dinner. Thus fortified, he began to talk about the case. His wife looked at him with anxiety. It is not his habit to talk shop, and she does not expect to be told anything of his cases till they are over. But his simple purpose was soon revealed. "You know everything, Joan. What do you think of the Cleeves?"

Mrs. Fortune gave him the opinion of the world, revised by her own placid and kind judgment. Cleeve was a lonely fellow. He lived to himself and his own people. He had been much absorbed in his first wife, after her death in the child. There was some surprise when he married again, but the lady was in all things approved—charmingly pretty, rich, of good breeding, plainly devoted to him. They were never apart. People laughed a little. But the child was not put aside. They would not be long away from him. Indeed, it was a common joke that Lady Cleeve believed she was his mother.

"Yes. Yes. You don't like 'em, Joan," Reggie murmured. "I wonder."

"Does a nice woman ever like a man who marries again?" Lomas smiled.

"The only rule is there's no rule," said Mrs. Fortune. She turned to her husband. "I think I might like him, but he stands off."

That was the first day of the Cleeve case.

In the morning Lomas, who loves his bed, was disturbed by Reggie. "Were you getting up to-day? I think you'd better. The ship's gone."

Lomas sat up. "Is she, though? Well, what about it?"

"I don't know. I thought you might. Exert the higher intelligence. But it's true. The Inspector has just rung up. Dover says she went out on the morning tide, heading down Channel. Swears nobody has gone aboard since they searched her, except two of her own men late last night, rather drunk. And she's off."

"What do you want to do now?"

"Oh, my aunt! What can we do? Wait. I know, what I'd have done in Dover last night: Arrest those two for drunk and disorderly and see what I could get out of them. But we're always missing the bus in this case. Nothing to do but wait for the next." He contemplated Lomas gloomily. "You might as well get up, though. Better warn coastguards and ports and people we want to hear of the good ship *Apate* if she comes in anywhere."

When Lomas, after a long conference with the telephone, came to breakfast, Reggie was behind a paper. "He's been and done it. Here you are. Reward of One Thousand Pounds for information leading to recovery of Viscount Stourham. Send it to the Earl of Cleeve at 999 Grosvenor Gate. Not to our active and intelligent police force. I'm afraid Cleeve didn't take to you, Lomas."

Lomas made an ugly noise. "Ugh. I wish you'd let it alone. He'll be bothering us with a mass of silly rumours."

"I wonder," Reggie murmured. "His London house, you observe. He abandons the county of Kent. I'm afraid we'd better go to London too."

"I wasn't thinking of staying here."

And to London they went, and every police force in the kingdom was inspired to watch for the little fair boy who was Viscount Stourham and a big dark closed car in which might be foreigners, and the air bore questions to ships in the Channel of the course of the Greek ship *Apate*. But the day passed and nothing came to Scotland Yard which could be set before Lomas as a fact, and from Cleeve there was no word.

On the next morning Cleeve himself appeared at Scotland Yard. His temper had not improved, he showed signs of strain. He wished, quite without courtesy, to know if he could expect the police to be of any use. Lomas, civility at a low temperature, was sorry they had not received the help which might have been expected.

Cleeve did not know what they had expected. The offer of a reward had brought a pack of nonsense, if they wanted that. He produced a handful of letters. Lomas looked them over and, rather remote and contemptuous, agreed that they were nonsense. Cleeve wanted to know if there was anything in that other nonsense about the Greeks and the ship at Dover. Lomas had found no further evidence. Cleeve supposed he never would. He had done nothing and didn't mean to try. Lomas, still civil, but below freezing-point, was employing all the resources of the police to find the child. And Cleeve laughed.

Some time after he had gone, Reggie drifted in, pale and vague of eye and movement and speech, but also demanding news. He was told. His wistful gaze settled upon Lomas. "Yes. You don't seem gettin' to love each other, you an' him. I wonder."

"The fellow's deuced hostile." Lomas frowned. "But I could excuse that. I felt he wouldn't open his mind, that's what stiffened me. I believe you're right, Reginald. He knows something."

"Yes, I think so," Reggie murmured drearily. "But the child—what's going to happen to the child—what's happening now?"

"It begins to look like a put-up job."

"Yes. Put up against a child. Oh, my hat! And we can't get near." He drew a long breath and stood up. "Well, you'd better have the Cleeves watched, you know. I can't do anything. I'll go down to the laboratory. A job is sedative." He wandered out.

He worked in his hospital laboratory till evening. He sought the loneliest of his clubs for dinner; he was loitering, heavily full and forlorn, over the tape machine in the sepulchral hall when he was called to the telephone.

"Lomas speaking. The ship has been sighted coming into Falmouth. Any ideas?"

"Oh, yes. Yes. Shake up the Falmouth police. Where are you? Scotland Yard. Good. I'll come along."

It was a message from a pilot boat sent through the signal-station at the Lizard. The *Apate* was going into Falmouth, reporting engine trouble.

"Yes. Has a lot of it, doesn't she?" Reggie murmured. "When is the night train? Somewhere about ten, what? We'll catch that nicely. And some of your heftier men wouldn't be amiss."

"I've warned Falmouth," Lomas said. "They'll watch the ship and detain her."

"I want the child," said Reggie.

"The child ought to be somewhere near Falmouth"—he stopped, he looked at Lomas with fear in his eyes—"or the fellows who had the child. Let's get on, let's get on." Lomas was persuaded. Lomas was collecting his forces and giving his orders, and in the middle of it the telephone rang again.

"What? What? Who are you? Oh, Cator. Good heavens! Go on after 'em. All right." Lomas turned to Reggie. "That's one of the men watching Cleeve's house. Cleeve and his wife have just taken a taxi to Paddington. They won't get away. There's another man following them. Just as well we looked after 'em, though."

"Yes. We can't afford to make mistakes," said Reggie. "But that wouldn't have mattered, as it's turnin' out. They wouldn't have got away, anyhow. Oh, come on."

Lomas bustled after him. "Why do you say it wouldn't matter?"

"Paddington's the station for Falmouth."

"Damme, if they're there we'll have some questions to ask Cleeve."

"Oh, yes. Yes. I have."

When their car stopped at Paddington, a man like a valet was briskly at the door. "Booked to Falmouth, sir. Got berths in the sleeping-car."

He was told he must watch it and he faded away. A square fellow closed on them as they walked to the platform. "No room in the sleeper, sir. Two last berths taken early this evening. Got you a compartment. We're just forward." They established themselves behind drawn blinds.

"Did you notice that?" said Lomas. "They knew they were going to Falmouth early this evening. And the *Apate* hadn't come in yet when I rang up the Falmouth police."

Reggie looked at him with dreary wonder. "Does that happen to mean anything to you?"

"It means they know too much about that ship."

"Oh, yes. Yes. I always thought they were interested in my Greeks. But what are they wanted for in Falmouth?"

Lomas frowned. "I'd like to confront Cleeve with that ship's captain."

"Yes. Yes. That is indicated. Lots of confrontation. Last scene. Everybody gettin' on the stage, livin' and dead. Oh,

my Lord! Let's try and sleep. We shall want to be fit in the morning."

For Falmouth you change out of that train at Truro. Lord and Lady Cleeve were anxious to do so. Reggie watched their scurry down the platform, while Lomas stretched himself awake. Then a little party of solid men made for the other train.

Just as it drew out one man more climbed into their carriage. "I've been on to the Falmouth police, sir. This Greek ship came in just after midnight. Police boat patrolling. An inspector's coming to meet the train."

"Seem to be all on our toes, don't we?" Reggie murmured. "Yes, I wonder if we're in time?"

The little train stopped. Cleeve was out on the instant and calling a porter. His wife and he hurried away. But two of the detectives were in front of them. A man of military aspect scanned the train and marched upon it. "Mr. Lomas, sir? I'm Inspector Hawken. I 'phoned your man at Truro. Nothing new since."

"We'll have something now," Lomas smiled. "I want you to go aboard the *Apate* and ask for the captain. Tell him you have orders to bring him ashore about the two men of his crew who got drunk at Dover. You can say the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Department has come down here to inquire into the affair. You don't know anything else. But you can frighten him like hell; I don't mind."

Inspector Hawken marched off with an air to frighten armies.

"Now then." Lomas stood up. "We only want the Cleeves."

"Oh. Oh, is that all?" Reggie murmured.

One of the detectives came back. "Gone to the Bristol Hotel, sir. I've got a car for you."

It was not far, but when they drove up Cleeve and his wife were already coming out of the hotel. "Good morning!" Lomas called. They started round; the tired faces were distorted with emotion. "You're in rather a hurry." He came out of the car. "But why are you in a hurry?"

Cleeve scowled. "I suppose he wrote to you too?"

"You've had a letter? What a pity you didn't tell me. I'm afraid you've not been quite frank with us, Lord Cleeve."

"Well, I didn't tell you."

"You didn't trust us, in fact. Why not?"

"Very well, if you like, I didn't trust you."

"The letter, please?" said Lomas.

Cleeve brought out a sheet of cheap paper. The writing was in pencil and laborious.

DR SIR,

Your advert, ofering reward for Vicount Stourham. I know how you could get him back if you was to come quick to Falmouth. Come to Blacky's in the Ope, which any will tell you of and ask for Pincher. Looking to you as a gentleman for the reward. Come in the daytime.

P.S.—You best come quick.

"Half educated and English." Lomas looked at Reggie. "Well, we'll try it." He turned sharply on Cleeve. "If you'd done your duty we could have taken this fellow and had what he knows last night."

"No, you couldn't," Cleeve said sullenly. "He says he's only there in the daytime."

"Bah, he wants to see who's coming," Lomas cried. "Now go on with you. Ask for the fellow. We'll do the rest."

The Ope is a court which runs down to the sea, a place of lounging and lodging for sailors. Cleeve and his wife hurried into it, asked for Blacky's, and were directed to a house something cleaner than the rest. A shaggy, frowsy man answered their knock. Pincher was in, for what he knew. He looked at Lady Cleeve's wan daintiness with curiosity. Would the gemmun go up? But the lady went too.

The next minute, the Ope was startled by a woman's scream. Cleeve put his head out of a window and shouted, "Lomas! Here, for Heaven's sake!"

Lomas came into the room to find a dead man. He lay in bed and it was sodden with his blood, and a wound gaped in his throat. "What do you know about it?" Lomas turned on the landlord.

"Gawd! I don't know nuffin, sir. He's been lodging here this two three days. Pincher 'e calls hisself, or Pincher Martin. Sleeping daytime, out o' nights. 'E said 'e was doing watchman on a yacht. 'E come in yesterday bit later 'n this, 'ad 'is usuals, an' I never see 'im since, so 'elp me Gawd. Anybody might 'ave come up to 'im."

Reggie turned from the body. "Killed by knife thrust in the throat. Many hours ago. Say last night. He may have been a sailor. But I think he was a chauffeur last." He looked vaguely about the room, from the puzzled frown of Lomas to Cleeve's scowl, to the wide-eyed horror of Lady

Cleeve. "And that's that. I suppose you don't know him, Cleeve?"

"Know him?" Cleeve took a step forward and looked again. "I never saw him before. I could swear that."

"Oh, yes. Yes. Didn't you know?" said Reggie.

"Come and meet him, Cleeve," said Lomas. He spoke to some of his men, he waved the Cleeves to the door.



"Come on, then. Let's try our captain."

"The captain?" Cleeve stared. "What do you mean?"

"The captain of the Greek ship *Apate*."

"She's in here?"

"I'll do anything you like," Cleeve muttered.

"Oh, but this dreadful thing!" Lady Cleeve cried. "How did it happen?"

"We'll attend to that," said Lomas. "If you want to know why it happened,



"The little man wrenched himself free and pulled out a pistol."

this fellow was killed so that he shouldn't be able to say what has become of the child."

"Oh, then we shall never know! Oh, Bertie!"

"We'll hear what the captain has to say about that," said Lomas. "Come to the police station, please."

They hurried on; much stared at by the loungers in the Ope, they came to the main street. Outside the post office Inspector Hawken was waiting. "I've got the captain, sir. He has the wind up. He asked to go into the post office to get his letters." The Inspector winked. "I was willing. One of my men went too."

A man came quickly out of the office, a dark, sleek little man. Another appeared

at the door and made signs to Inspector Hawken. The Inspector dashed forward and caught the little man. "If you please, sir. I'm a police officer."

"What do you want with me?"

"I'll have to ask you a few questions."

The little man looked quickly all round him. He saw the Cleeves and Lomas and the shepherding detectives; he wrenched himself free and pulled out a pistol. The Inspector closed again as he fired. They wrestled together; the street was a turmoil of scrambling men. There was another shot and another. The detectives had him down. But they fell upon a dead man.

"My oath, he's gone," the Inspector gasped. Blood began to ooze from the sweating face. He rose and stared at Lomas. "I swear I thought I'd got him."

"Where's that captain?" Lomas frowned. The captain was brought in the grip of a sturdy Cornishman. "Do you know this man?"

The captain, a portly fellow of fierce moustaches, looked and shuddered and sucked in his lower lip.

"They spoke in the post office. Spoke foreign," the Cornishman said.

"I know him, yes," the captain burst out. "He is my owner; he is Mr. Constantine Castro. Why do you shoot him?"

"Your owner. That won't get you off. You'd better come along and tell the truth." Lomas turned away. "Everyone at the station please, Inspector. I shall want you, Cleeve." The detectives made a way for them through the gathering crowd.

In a big bare room at the police station the captain was put into a chair opposite Lomas. "Where's Lord Cleeve? Sit at the end of the table, please. Now, my man, you are Captain Janni, master of the Greek ship *Apate*?"

"I am the captain, yes. Mr. Castro, he was the owner."

"You've acted under his orders? You know that's no defence on a criminal charge."

"But I 'ave done no crime. I 'ave done nothing."

"You know what you're brought here for. You and your men were concerned in kidnapping a little boy, Viscount Stourham, when your ship was in Dover."

"It is not true, sir. You search my ship in Dover. You find nothing. You search it now; you find nothing again. I 'ave no little boy."

"Have you ever seen this man before, Cleeve?" said Lomas sharply. Cleeve was looking at Captain Janni with a queer uneasy stare. "You don't care to say?"

"I don't know," Cleeve muttered. He turned to Lomas. "I knew this fellow Castro. Met him in Greece."

"Friend of yours?"

"No. I met him. I didn't like him."

"Any particular reason for not liking him?"

Cleeve shifted in his chair. "I—I loathed the fellow."

The captain swore a spitting Greek oath. "And he is to be shot, my owner, because this my Lord does not like him!"

"Your owner started shooting, Janni. If he shot himself, he had his reasons. What were they?"

"He did not shoot himself." The captain was gathering truculence. "He was shot down like a dog."

"That won't do." Lomas smiled. "What was he up to that he tried to shoot a policeman? What was he doing in Falmouth at all? Where's that boy, Janni? Speak out now or you'll have ten years of an English prison—if it isn't the rope. Do you want to hang because your owner planned to steal the child? Don't be trying any more lies. I know too much. Castro had your men ashore at Dover and they stole the boy to put him aboard your ship. We watched you so closely they couldn't do it. So you came in to Falmouth to pick him up here. You haven't got him and you won't get him. But we've got you and we'll hold you till he's found, and hang you if he's found dead. Now then—where is he?"

"What do I know?" the captain screamed. "I know nothing, nothing, nothing. Castro, he never told. What can I do? You 'ave killed the only man who knew."

"Think!" Lomas bent forward. "Think! It's the rope for you."

"But I do not know. I cannot tell." The captain wept and beat at himself. "I am nothing in it. It is Castro, 'e only knew, and you kill 'im."

Lomas watched his paroxysm a moment. "So much the worse for you. Take him away. Take him away."

The wretched man was dragged out screaming. "Now then, Vardon, go aboard that ship and get the men who were drunk at Dover. Quick. Inspector, you'll have to find out where this fellow Castro has been in Falmouth. Get on to it."

"Have you finished with me?" said Cleeve.

Lomas flung back in his chair. "Damme, Cleeve, you're very disinterested. What do you want to do?"

Cleeve looked at him under heavy brows. "I want to find my wife," he said.

"What? I suppose she's here." But she was not.

When the shots were fired, when the detectives ran in upon the dead man, Reggie stepped aside. His hand drew at the sleeve of one. "Sergeant Cator," he said softly, and Cator fell back to him. Reggie's eyes were on Lady Cleeve. She, too, was out of the crowd, she was hurrying away. "Don't stop her," Reggie murmured; "don't lose her." And Cator followed her and Reggie followed Cator. She went fast through the town, past the Swan Pool, and away by a footpath through wild pasture, and Reggie closed on Cator. The roofs of a tiny hamlet were near. Lady Cleeve stopped there and asked the name of it. She made haste on, climbing over rough ground, and they heard the roar of the sea. The hillside was broken with heaps of stones, and above stood the ruins of the stone chimney and engine-house of an old mine.

"Run for it," Reggie muttered, but as round as he is, it was he who came first to Lady Cleeve. She had given one glance behind, she ran on, she was at the low wall which guarded the mine shaft.

"Yes. Thanks very much," Reggie panted. "We'll do the rest." He gripped her arm. She was pulling at the knots by which a rope hanging down the shaft was fastened.

"Mr. Fortune!" Red and dishevelled, she stared at him with wild eyes. "He's here. My Peter's here. I—I heard that man say so."

"Yes. When?" said Reggie, and reached for her other hand. "Take her, Cator."

"If you please, ma'am." Cator embraced her. Reggie began to haul at the rope.

But she fought madly, she broke a hand free, she had a pistol out. Cator wrenched it from her as she fired. She tore herself away from him and sprang at the rope, flinging herself in front of Reggie as he hauled, tearing it out of his hands. He thrust her aside. Cator gripped at her again, but she clung to the rope and threw her weight upon it, lying on the wall, flung herself over. At the jerk, Reggie slid and staggered, but he held fast. The rope was torn from her fingers and she fell into the dark with a shriek that ended in a thud.

He stood a moment, breathing hard, and drew at the rope cautiously. It bore a light weight still. Into the daylight rose a little boy. A bandage was bound across his mouth, his white face was wet, his eyes haunted.

"All over now, Peter," Reggie said, and gathered the boy in his arms. "All right now. Goin' home, my dear." He pulled the bandage away from the wan mouth.

"Ooh, it hurts," the boy moaned, and his little hands plucked at the rope round his chest. Then they stopped with a quivering spasm. "Oh, I shall fall," he screamed, and clutched Reggie.

Cator was cutting at the knots. "All right, old man," Reggie said gently. "You're safe now."

The child moaned. "Everything goes round and round." His head thrust into Reggie's shoulder.

"Oh, no. Not now. Nothing goes round any more. All fixed and firm."

"What was it vat did fall, all crying and wump? Ooh!"

"That was just the last of it. All over."

"Is it really?" The haunted eyes sought Reggie's. "You're not like ve bad men. Who are you?"

"I'm Mr. Fortune. Your Mr. Fortune. Come to make you all right and jolly again."

"I did say my prayers, you know. I said vem down vere."

"Yes. And then I was sent, you see. So it came all right."

"Was vat one of the bad men vat fell."

"Just a badness trying to hurt you. But it didn't and never will: and all the bad men are caught: and everything's going to be all right for Peter."

"I did say Our Favver," the boy said. "But it all went muzzy in my head." He began to cry. . . .

Some time after the telephone in the police station rang. "Hello, Lomas. Fortune speaking. From the hospital. Have you got Cleeve?"

"I'm holding him," said Lomas grimly.

"Told him anything? No? Good. Bring him along." Reggie came down to a room in the hospital, where, under the cold and curious eyes of Lomas, Cleeve stood waiting with the face of a man in torment.

"We have your boy," Reggie said gravely. "He's alive. Lady Cleeve isn't. We couldn't save her,"

Cleeve shook, Cleeve gulped. "Peter is all right?" he cried.

"I wouldn't say that. Peter's going to be all right—if you're wise. You haven't been very wise, have you? The child has been living in hell for days."

"Oh, my God!" Cleeve shuddered. "What could I do? I didn't know."

"No, I believe that," Reggie said gently.

"You didn't know!" Lomas snapped. "You had a good guess. When Fortune told you there was a Greek ship in it, you suspected your wife. I saw that."

"Well, well!" Reggie murmured, and gazed at him with reverence. "You do see things, Lomas."

"If you'd told us Lady Cleeve was mixed up with that rascal Castro, we should have stopped this damnable business."

"Should we, Lomas? We're very, very clever," Reggie murmured. "I wonder if we should."

Cleeve had hid his face in his hands. "Don't you see, I didn't know," he groaned. He looked up. "Is Dora dead?"

"Lady Cleeve killed herself when we found the boy."

Cleeve shuddered. "Well, everyone will know everything now; I may as well tell you. Don't you see, I believe Dora—Dora did—— Oh, well. We were happy. I used to think she loved Peter too. All the more as she hadn't a child. Then she met this fellow Castro in Athens. I don't believe there was anything—I wouldn't believe it. But after we came back she was different. I noticed it first with Peter. She made a great deal of him still, but—I can't put it in words—she wasn't kind. And then—this. You see, I had nothing I could tell you. I really don't know what she wanted."

"She wanted to hurt the child," said Reggie gravely, "because she hadn't one, because she was jealous you loved him, because—it doesn't matter. She arranged with this scoundrel Castro to carry him off to Greece. I'm afraid they meant Peter to have rather a bad time there. We spoilt their chance at Dover. Castro ordered his ship round to Falmouth and brought the child down here. Castro and his chauffeur. They hid the child hanging on a rope down an old mine shaft. Not a nice man, the late Castro. But ingenious. The chauffeur watched at night, Castro by day. Then the chauffeur read of the reward and wrote to you. You should have told us of that. We might have saved the fellow's life. But perhaps it's as well as it is. Lady Cleeve must have telephoned to warn Castro, and Castro made an end of the chauffeur. I rather wonder he didn't let the child drop down the mine and run for it. I suppose he wanted to keep a hold on Lady Cleeve. But she wasn't going to let him give her away. When she saw him being taken she shot him."

"It was Dora!"

"Oh, yes. Yes. Didn't you know? I thought you might have guessed then. She made off to the mine. But we were a little too quick. She tried to drop the child down. She missed and went down herself."

"She was lucky," said Lomas fiercely.

"I don't know." Reggie looked at him with dreamy eyes. "I wasn't thinking of her myself. We can manage the thing now."

"Peter saw her?" Cleeve groaned. "Peter knows?"

"Oh, no. No. Peter didn't see. Peter doesn't know anything. Peter isn't going to know. That's your part. You have something to make up to the child, Cleeve."

Cleeve drew deep breath. "Ah, if I can, if I can!" he muttered. "But everybody has to know the whole cursed thing. Everybody will be——"

"Nobody will. For publication—the late Mr. Castro kidnapped your child, and, being caught, shot himself. Lady Cleeve, tryin' to rescue the child from the mine, fell down, and Mr. Fortune and Sergeant Cator couldn't save her. That's all. Now just come to Peter. He wants you."

Cleeve gripped his hand. Cleeve tried to talk and failed.

"All right. In a minute," said Reggie, and took Lomas away.

"What a fool! What a fool!" Lomas said.

"Yes. Yes. He gets fond of people," said Reggie. "How clever you are, Lomas."

Another "Mr. Fortune" story will appear in our next issue.

PETS OF ROYAL PERSONAGES

By EVELYN GRAHAM

An interesting article by the biographer of Princess Mary, the Queen of Spain, King Albert of the Belgians, etc.

MOST of us have had a pet at some time in our lives; in fact, a fondness for animals is one of the most universal forms of self-expression. Are there not times when one feels a longing to get away from one's fellow-humans, when one craves solitude, and at such times is not a dog an eminently suitable companion—either for a long walk across open country or a quiet evening by one's own fireside?

Animals can be such very understanding companions, and in those treasured moments of introspection which we all need for our intellectual welfare, a dumb friend is an admirable confidant, invariably an excellent if not always responsive listener, and after all can be relied upon to keep one's innermost secrets. Royalty is no exception to the general rule—in fact, most present-day royal personages have their dumb friends, and in this article I want to introduce you to some of them.



[*Russell, London.*

QUEEN MARY AND THE KING'S PARROT.

King Albert of the Belgians, unlike Henri III of France, who dreaded the presence of a cat, has the greatest fondness for these animals, as is well known to the feline fraternity of Brussels. It is not uncommon for twenty or more cats to storm the Royal Palace and serenade His Majesty until fed by the royal hand.

Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein is the owner of an almost perfect specimen of that much-prized, high-caste breed, the Chinchilla, which is distinguished from plebeian members of the tribe by its superb fluffy coat. She is the only cat in the world, probably, that can claim the distinction of a private address and letter-box. "Her Royal Highness Princess Imp" is the name of this aristocratic favourite. Every morning the postman on his rounds brings her a letter addressed, "H.R.H. Princess Imp, Seymour Lodge, Windsor." She is not a learned cat, and makes no pretence of reading the letter—which, by the way, is sent by her loving mistress. On the contrary, Princess Imp tears the "missive" up. It is a diversion to which she has grown so accustomed that if perchance a day passes without bringing her the usual

correspondence she sulks in her boudoir and refuses to be comforted.

If Princess Imp lacks anything to make her supremely happy it is certainly not her royal mistress's fault. Her meals are carefully prepared for her, and are always served on time. The milk supplied her comes from His Majesty's own cows.

King George has a parrot which he himself feeds each morning. The bird has been taught to address her master respectfully as "the Captain" since she first came into His Majesty's possession when the King was a naval officer in a warship; thus whenever King George approaches her cage the bird will call out shrilly "Here comes the Captain" with true nautical breeziness.

During the King's long illness Charlotte has been extremely disconsolate at her royal master's absence from his study where her bird-cage hangs.

"Where's the Captain?" she demanded immediately anybody entered the room, and whatever reply was made did not console her very much. One of Charlotte's peculiarities is that she always uses nautical language, although sometimes, as is the way with members of the parrot tribe, she will transgress the laws of polite speech, and on one occasion the Prince of Wales was ordered by his father's pet to "Go to hell!" His Highness was greatly amused and inquiry showed that the bird had so annoyed one of the royal servants by its persistent screeching that, in a moment of irritation, he had turned and addressed this comment to the outraged bird.



[*Topical.*

THE DUKE AND DUCHESS OF YORK ARE GREAT LOVERS OF DOGS.

This same bird often amuses members of the Royal Family by her skill in drawing corks, which she can do as adroitly as any waiter.

Queen Victoria was a very catholic dog-lover, and did much to make dog-keeping fashionable, as distinct from popular. Three pets she had in particular, "Marco," "Roy," and "Spot." "Marco" was the Queen's chief favourite, and his ancestry could be traced back, it is said, to the Crusaders' time. He was what is called a Pomeranian, and at one of the dog shows won first prize—the mug of honour. The other favourite, "Roy," was a collie, and "Spot" was a fox-terrier. The Queen had also a tiny Yorkshire terrier that weighed but two and a half pounds. Surely the smallest dog in England!

In 1909 Queen Alexandra was presented with a valuable Chinese Chow by Captain Greville, who commissioned Captain Hamer, of the Indian frontier forces, to find a specimen of a pure-bred Chinese Chow if possible. After six months Captain Hamer at length found the object of his search, and the animal was promptly despatched to England, reaching Sandringham early in the New Year.

The dog was brought through China, across to Yokohama, and thence by steamer to Vancouver Island. Considerable opposition was offered to the dog travelling across the American continent on the Canadian Pacific Railway, but when the reason of the journey was explained by Captain Hamer the opposition was speedily withdrawn. At Montreal a rest of five days was ordered

for recuperation after the first part of the journey. From Montreal the journey was continued to Liverpool, and thence to Euston and Sandringham. Throughout the dog was treated with the greatest solicitude for his comfort and safety.

and photographed with them, they never caught on.

"Cæsar," King Edward's devoted wire-haired fox-terrier, won for his master several first prizes. After His Majesty's death, Cæsar would accompany Queen



THE DUCHESS OF YORK WITH HER FAVOURITE LABRADOR, "GLEN."

The dog's diet chiefly consisted of rice, specially dried after being cooked, and fish, with a very occasional meat bone.

Queen Alexandra helped to popularise the Borzoi, or Russian wolfhound, but though she loved Japs and was often both painted

Alexandra everywhere, and was everything in the way of faithfulness and devotion that could be imagined.

Our present King is not so keen a dog fancier as was his predecessor, though as a shooting-man—and an extraordinary good

one—he has some good gun dogs, especially Labradors.

Princess Mary had a devoted canine playmate of her girlhood days named "Happy," a wire-haired terrier. This pet she often used to smuggle into her bedroom in contravention of her mother's orders, and Happy, when discovered, was always unceremoniously bundled out and handed to a footman for internment in the stables. On such occasions it is rumoured that Princess Mary's pillow became wet with tears at the summary, though temporary, separation from her pet.

The Prince of Wales has a little Cairn terrier named "Cora," which, when he set out for his last African tour, he left behind at York House. Cora at once began to fret considerably for her royal master, for she was his constant companion, and invariably rode in his car and slept near his bed. From the day of the departure of the Prince on his tour she refused to eat at all.

As soon as the Queen heard of the little dog's distress she sent a groom to bring Cora to Buckingham Palace, in the hope that she would find some consolation in playing with Nancy and Caroline, King George's two pet Sealyhams.



[*Speaight, Ltd.*

PRINCESS MARY WITH HER YORKSHIRE TERRIER.



[*Farringdon Photo Co.*

PRINCE GEORGE AND HIS SPANIEL.

The Duchess of York, of course, loves animals; in fact, all through her life she has had a pet of some kind, beginning with pigeons and rabbits and extending to a pony and even a goldfish. To-day she possesses a most faithful friend in "Glen," her beautiful Labrador, who is the Duchess's constant companion in the country, and incidentally a treasured friend and playmate of the little Princess Elizabeth, who is never so happy as when romping with him, while "Glen" is the most tolerant of playmates, and allows "Betty" the utmost latitude in kissing and fondling him and even riding on his broad back.

The Queen of Spain, formerly Princess Ena of Battenberg, has a cocker spaniel named "Ping," who answers to his name and exhibits remarkable affection for his distinguished mistress. He is provided with a complete wardrobe, including warm coats made of costly silk, and seven hand-

some collars, one for each day of the week.

The ex-Kaiser Wilhelm II now has two wolfhounds named "Fritz" and "Karl" at Doorn. At Potsdam, before his exile, he had a dachshund named "Spitzel," which often accompanied his Imperial master on tours to the Front, and sometimes followed at the heels of the Emperor's horse when he reviewed his troops. Once Spitzel was missing, and an Imperial order was issued from Potsdam ordering special squads of the Berlin Police to search for him. He was eventually found asleep in the sentry-box of one of the sentries outside the Palace, and the unfortunate guard was punished for "hiding" the Imperial pet.

Before the War there was a tendency among the royal ladies of the European Courts to harbour strange and unconventional pets—a habit formerly confined to ladies more or less intimately connected with the stage.

The Kaiser did not approve of the fashion, and he more than once vigorously protested against his extravagant daughter-in-law Princess Eitel-Friedrich's penchant for pet monkeys. At Potsdam she had a model monkey-house containing no fewer than fourteen of these animals.

On one occasion one of them escaped and wrought great havoc in the Imperial gardens before it was captured by the retired non-commissioned officer who was responsible for the welfare of the Princess's pets.

The beautiful Countess of Montignoso, whose unhappy marriage to the King of Saxony ended in divorce, is said to have sought consolation at having been deprived of her children in the extraordinary interest she took in a number of American iguanas, which she fed herself. The Countess's vegetable bill for her pets was said to amount to a hundred marks a week.

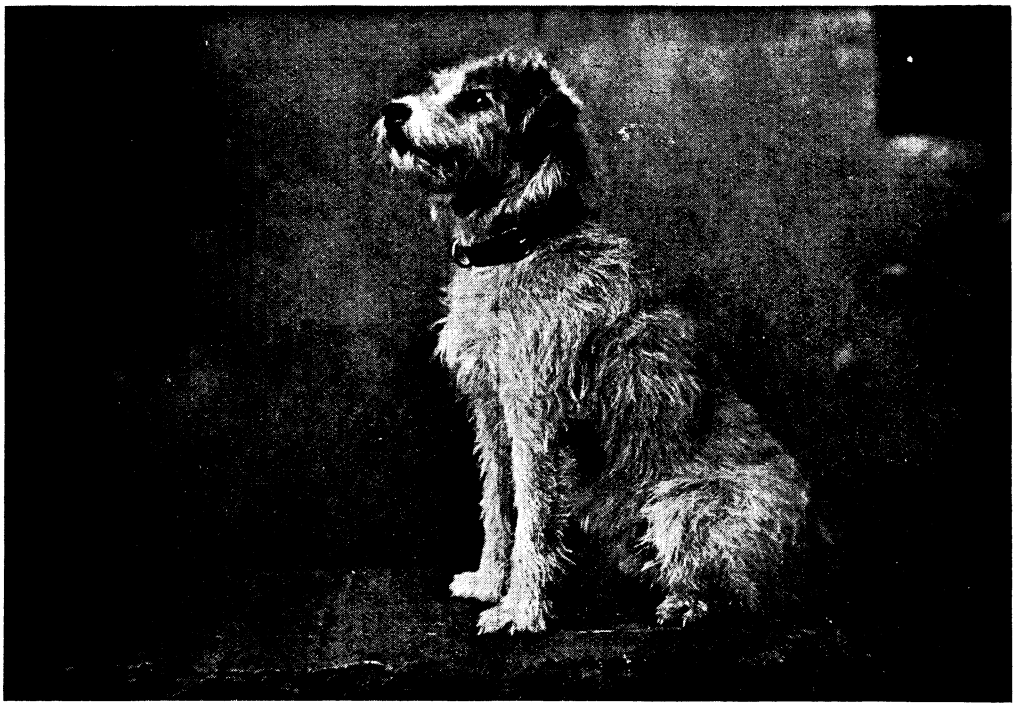
Another royal lady who had a weakness for lizards was the Duchess Vera of Wurtemburg, but it was to chameleons that she was particularly attached. Whilst still a Russian Grand Duchess this high-born lady indulged her fancy for these curious pets, and with them created a mild sensation in Stuttgart when, in 1877, she was married to the Duke Eugene. The Duchess Vera would never tire of watching her chameleons shooting out their tongues to a length of six or seven inches.

Princess Hildegarde of Bavaria, a daughter of Prince Rupprecht, received as a birthday present from the Hereditary Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Strelitz a Persian lynx, or caracal, which he had brought back from German East Africa. It was a handsome



[*Alfieri.*

THE PRINCE OF WALES AND HIS TINY CAIRN, "CORA."



[*W. S. Stuart.*

"CÆSAR," FAMOUS FOR YEARS AS THE INSEPARABLE COMPANION OF KING EDWARD VII AND LATER OF QUEEN ALEXANDRA.

bright brown creature with a long tail, and, although naturally fierce in disposition, soon learnt to take meat directly from the hands of its mistress.

The late Czar's one and only great-aunt, the Grand Duchess Alexandra-Josefovna of Russia, bought two pairs of camels some years ago while on a visit to the Caucasus, and at her lovely place outside St. Petersburg devoted much of her time each summer to her somewhat uncommon pets. She had no fewer than seventeen of the animals, and several Zoological Gardens in various Russian towns were presented with camels bred upon the Grand Duchess's estate.

The ex-Emperor Karl had a white horse which he rode at the Budapest coronation. It was of a very mild, gentle disposition, and occasionally appeared at the State Opera, where it was a great favourite. In the rôle of Grane, in Wagner's "Götterdämmerung," it always behaved with admirable patience, despite the flames and the collapse of Valhalla at the close.

In consequence of public economies the horses at the former Court stables had to go, and a Magyar Count, hearing of its pending dismissal, and feeling afraid that the faithful animal might become the prey of some butcher, desired to acquire it in order to shoot it with all the solemnity due to such an historic creature. He found, however, the price to be prohibitive, and the Hungarian Government bought the animal, which was despatched to the Magyar capital, where it was allowed to finish its days in peace.

At one time the ex-Empress Eugenie would never travel without a little wicker basket. This basket, which was lined with silk, contained her only pet—a very uncommon one—in the form of a full-grown hedgehog. The creature was fed by the Empress herself, and she would allow no one else to touch it.

It was reserved for the Baroness von Heldburg, the morganatic and third wife of Duke George II of Saxe-Meiningen, to be a royal lover of snakes. She had several of them, and they were so tame that now and then she would horrify her husband's friends by appearing at table with one of the reptiles coiled round her neck. Nevertheless the Baroness, who was born plain Helena Franz, managed to live happily with her husband (although she was his

third wife) for no fewer than thirty-four years.

James I of England, although a remorseless destroyer of animals in the chase, had an intense fondness for seeing them around him, happy and well cared for in a state of domesticity.

When Sir Thomas Dale, a settler from the newly formed colony of Virginia, brought on his return to England some flying squirrels, the King was at once seized with a boyish impatience to add them to his private menagerie in St. James's Park.

In 1629 the King of Spain sent James I a gift of an elephant and five camels, much to the disgust of Mr. Secretary Conway, who said how little he was in love with royal presents, which cost his master "as much to maintain as would a garrison." The elephant, as part of its dietary, was to have six bottles of wine per diem, and the cost of maintaining the royal quadruped was estimated at £275 12*s.* per annum.

In 1623 King James gave a grant for the lease of two gardens and a tenement in the Minories to one John Banal, on the condition of building and maintaining a house wherein to keep His Majesty's newly imported silk-worms.



[*Thomas Fall.*

QUEEN ALEXANDRA AND HER FAVOURITE BORZOI.

EDWARD P.: The Story of H.R.H. the Prince of Wales, by Evelyn Graham, begins in our next issue.



STARTLING RESULT OF THE RECENT DUTCH ART EXHIBITION.

LADY: This picture by Rembrandt, priced three-and-six—is it an original or only a copy?



"'Ain't you never heard of Ole Shuck Dawg?'"

THE HEADLESS HOUND

By R. H. MOTTRAM

ILLUSTRATED BY S. ABBÉY

"THERE!" cried Ginever, just like the retired lawyer and admirable uncle that he was. In obedience to his raised hand, his niece Marjorie stopped the car with a squeak of the brakes. They were going due north, in a very narrow sandy lane, which suddenly sloped sharply downhill. Overhead leaned one of those violently twisted dwarf oaks only to be found on exposed coast-line. Either bank was knee-deep with wild scabious and campion, wild rose and orchis. In the V made by the tree and the bank were framed patches of cornfield, clumps of green, a huddle of red-roofed houses, and then, piercingly blue, cutting the horizon with its sweeping curve, the sea. Ginever drew a long breath.

"Delicious!"

"Umps!"

"Do you know, I don't believe we shall find a better place for tea. Shall we stop here?"

"Let's!"

Doris and Olive had the tea basket out, and Marjorie backed the car a few yards into a convenient gate, while their uncle selected a spot on the top of the bank. Beneath the dwarf oak there were twenty square yards of sandy, rough heath and gorse and wild flowers before you came to the hedge of the cultivated field. But while the kettle was singing, Ginever had adjusted his glasses.

"Dear, dear, what a number of houses! That must have been because Clement Scott discovered this place in the 'nineties. But when I first remember, from this spot—this lane is the only road from civilisation—there was just this horse-shoe of low hills; at one end the church—good gracious, its repaired and roofed, it used to be a ruin; at the other end the Manor, inaccessible, of course; and, in the gap of the horse-shoe, that one little street of grey flint hovels—you can still trace them trending down there to the cliff edge. But right in the middle of the horse-shoe—I can't find it!"

"What, Uncle?"

"Bullen's mill! Ah, gone, of course. There, below us, half-way to the village, is a mound, and a lot of poppies growing. That was the windmill, always 'Bullen's' mill. That was where poor little Euphrosyne got her fright."

"Euphrosyne. That's the name of the old Miss Frost who used to keep the school in the Close, isn't it, Uncle?"

"Yes, my dear; but do not be so final. Some day perhaps you'll be old Miss, or old Mrs., and people will laugh when you tell them you used to have bobbed hair and silk stockings on view. Old Miss Frost was a little girl here, in pantalets and ringlets. She was sent to stay at Bullen's mill because she was so white and small, and the good old servant Martha had married Bullen. There were no lodgings or hotels here then. Just a few score fishermen; someone in the Manor, that one never saw; someone in the parish living, who didn't live here; and the place was run by old Bullen, the miller and farmer, and by a certain Blazey, who kept the Lobster Inn at the top of the street there."

"One minute, Uncle. If I put your cup there, you won't knock it over, will you? Scone or jam sandwich?"

"Scone, please."

"Now about Miss Frost!"

"You must recollect that when I knew her she was an old woman. She had taught my mother. In those last years when she retired, and I was her man of business, and came down here to see her at—it must be that boarding-house with the verandah—then she told me of her childhood's fright—the terror that had overtaken her seventy years before."

"Dates, dates. Where are we getting to, Uncle?"

"It must have been the eighteen-twenties. Can you imagine what a school-missis looks like in her childhood?"

"Like anyone else."

"I don't feel sure. Anyhow, Miss Frost's parents took the then unheard-of step of sending her over here for the month of September in her seventh year. It was no watering-place. There were no such things. Brighton was only just started, let alone this village of Beckhythe. It was not so much regarded as seaside, as the country. Bullen never went near the sea. The great point was change of air, and Martha Bullen's well-tried cookery, fresh milk and eggs, just beginning to be recognised as suitable for puling little girls. For Miss Frost admitted that she was undersized and peaky. Almost destined to scholasticism, I should say."

"Rubbish, Uncle; look at our mistresses. Golf, hockey, swimming the Channel, climbing the Alps!"

"A new species, my dear. Miss Frost was given the care of the daughters of gentlemen in order to make them into ladies, not into women. Of such was the Kingdom of Queen Victoria. Women did not come in for years after!"

"Lord!"

"Anyway, on some forgotten day in the eighteen-twenties, a thin, pale, rather frightened little girl must have seen this very view we are now looking at, from the seat of the carrier's cart. Somewhere down on that poppy-grown hump stood the great old black windmill, waving its arms. I should think it impressed her as sinister. But in the little flint-bordered garden stood kind old Martha, the nurse of her babyhood, reminiscent of a great wide, warm, safe lap, a coarse apron, custards and bedtime stories. Even across three-quarters of a century Miss Frost could recollect how, except for Martha, the country struck her as a wave strikes you between the shoulders

when bathing. At first, it positively upset her. At the end of a week she was well again and a different girl. The thing that next beset her was an enormous curiosity. The little inhabitant of some great old house in Easthampton, where everything was known and fixed, began to grow, physically and mentally, in the new world of Beckhythe, confined between these low hills and the sea, watched over by the ruined church on one side, and the inaccessible Manor house on the other, with Bullen's mill dead in the centre, and the village between it and the shore below those cliffs of gravel. There was no one for her to play with. Martha had been well trained. Little Miss Frossy couldn't associate with rough fisher-children, of course. Martha had none of her own. Bullen, by his first marriage, had two grown-up sons, but neither they nor Bullen himself had any time to spare from the mill and the farm. Martha was busy in her kitchen, and the little visitor played in the garden. It was when she ventured beyond its green paling and sunflowers that, as the song says, her troubles began.

"It seems that, even in childhood, she was accessible to the charms of the picturesque. The first thing she wanted to see was the ruined church. No wonder that, starting so early, she became one of a race of school-folk who trained the young in the romantic tradition. Anyhow, it seems she walked out of the garden one day, and had got as far as the coast road on her way, when she met Blazey. To the end of her life she never knew whether this was his surname or Christian; it was the only one ever used. She knew him because he was a frequent visitor at the mill, where he and Bullen would arrange between them such small supplies and services as the fisher-people needed. Between them they owned all the horses and carts in the parish, and Blazey's Lobster Inn was also shop, post office, posting house—in a word, the carrier's cart called there once a week, and that was all the communication Beckhythe then needed with the outer world, ostensibly.

"Blazey impressed little Miss Frossy. After all those years she could describe him as if seen but yesterday. He had a very big head, perfectly hairless, bald and shaven, great pouchy eyes, a flat nose with no bridge, like a dog's, and great ears that he could move. He habitually wore his mouth open, his tongue lolling out, his hands in the pockets of his knee-breeches. Only in the worst of weather did he produce an old three-cornered hat; usually he went bareheaded at a sort of trot. Such was the figure which little Miss Frossy must have found barring her way to the ruined church of Beckhythe, that golden still September afternoon. 'And where might you be a-goin', Miss?' he asked, breathing at her such a concentrated blast of rum and tobacco as seemed to the strictly brought-up child nothing less than the fire and brimstone of Sunday reading.

"'Going to look at the church, please!'

"'Shouldn't do that,' breathed Blazey.

"Now Miss Frossy had been reared with a nice sense of social distinction. Blazey was repugnant, but she understood well enough that he was not entitled to give her an order. I suppose she did nothing, so he went on:

"'There's queer folk and rum doings in there!' and he turned his great bloodshot eyes towards the church.

"'What sort of folk?' asked little curiosity.

"'Folk that might carry you right away!'

"This time a delicious horror thrilled the little girl:

"'What are they like?'

"'Like—ain't you never heard of Ole Shuck Dawg?'

"'No, never!'

"'Lor'—well—he's just like a great big hound—with no 'ead on's shoulders!'

"I'm afraid it sounds foolish rather than awful as I say it. I can only tell you that after decades of life had rolled over that incident, Miss Frost could still remember how dreadful it seemed to little Frossy. I suppose you girls don't believe in ghosts?"

"Believe, no. But we've been frightened as kids!"

"Then no doubt you found that it is always the intangible that frightens. The face that has no features, the body that is nobody—often mere sound or movement, are most terrifying of all. The Headless Hound seemed to her the last refinement of evil. How could she help it. Nowadays folk-lore experts have sorted out some mythological dog with no head, of Scandinavian origin, in whom the older men and women down there in the village probably still believe. But little Miss Frossy was a child in an age when even grown-ups saw the Devil, erect on two legs, and Hell was only a few feet below the road you walked

on. And the personality of Blazey helped to darken her vision. He was, I suppose, what we should call deficient, with criminal tendencies—a lump of bone and muscle informed by a single streak of acquisitive cunning. He looked—I expect—like a hound. She turned and ran back to the farm. Of course, I can only give you a very imperfect story, as it was given me, by an old lady, unused to story-telling, who remembered certain incidents that happened to her as a little girl. I suspect that if she had been more receptive or older, she might have noticed a lot of nodding and whispering going on over her head or behind her back about then. The nights were drawing in. No longer was the darkness a semi-luminous affair of a few hours. The time was ripe for people who had any business to transact, that couldn't bear the light of day, to set about it. You will see presently why I think so. Anyhow, the next thing Miss Frost remembered was a very beautiful evening when she had been put to bed early by Martha, who was so busy, having to cook a great meal for Bullen and the boys, and possibly even for others. Why they wanted it at seven o'clock at night, and what was going to make them so busy, didn't interest little Frossy. But the last glow of sunset did, and she got up in her little bed and leaned on the low window-sill, nearly on the floor level, as windows used to be in those old farm-houses. The picturesque interested her. And when she looked at the view—very little different to that at which we are now looking—no doubt it was picturesque enough. Purple hill, and rosy sky, and wonderful opaline sea—and little stars, coming out as the sunset dwindled. And then, just as if to please her, one bright little star came out, quite down in the sea, twinkled a moment and vanished. If she had been a boisterous modern girl she might have said 'Bully!'"

"Go it, Uncle. What did the little nincompoop say?"

"Nothing, my dear, except perhaps a little murmured prayer of thanks for the wonders of creation. And the Wonders of Creation immediately justified her. For, while she looked, another star lit up on the half-tumble-down tower of the church, twinkled and vanished. This, I judge, was almost too picturesque for little Miss Frossy. The view from her window was wide, but not wide enough. There might be stars on the chimney of the Manor, invisible round the corner in the trees, on the top of the windmill, creaking somewhere above her head. So, curiosity overcoming whatever recollection she retained of Blazey's warning, she slipped on some sufficient articles of clothing, popped out into the dark old passage—and evidently still retained some sense of naughtiness. For Miss Frost recollected that there were two stairs—one which descended into a sort of cupboard in the kitchen, and another that opened into the mill yard—relic, no doubt, of some ancient remodelling of the premises. She took the latter, to avoid discovery, groped her way down in the dark, found a latch, opened the door, and stepped out. The door swung to behind her, she wasn't tall enough to reach the latch from outside, and there she was, confirmed in her star-gazing. The tower of the mill, with its crucifix of sails, must have stood above her like some great symbol. All around—can't you imagine it?—the autumn dusk, and that little girl from the town, going out into the unknown, no street pavement beneath her feet, no lamp to guide her. And then—clean across the years Miss Frost had never forgotten it—the sudden halt, the sense of impending danger, the awfulness of the danger *that was not there.* Rooted to the spot, by the gate where the cart road entered the mill yard, she heard Fate approaching her. There was a pad-pad of soft, heavy footsteps and some great animal brushed against her. Dimly outlined in the darkness, she only recalled one thing about it. There was no head. At this, she fainted."

"Little silly!"

"I'm not so sure. Fainting was the fashion then. There was something to be said for it. Nothing else provided the woman of those days with such relief from the various catastrophes she had to undergo. Anyhow, when little Miss Frossy came to, she was in the kitchen, lying in Martha's lap. Martha had drawn the big old settle up to the great fire, which, more than one guttering candle, lit the old barn of a place. When she opened her eyes, Martha left off rubbing her feet and gave her a sip out of a glass, of something that stung, burned the throat, and gave a pleasant warmth lower down. I very much suspect it was hot spirits. Three or four people at the table paid no regard to her. What with Martha and the great fire, and the hot stuff, a complete reaction took her, a delicious lassitude, so that presently, when

Martha carried her upstairs, she went soundly to sleep, and did not wake until broad daylight, with Martha standing over her.

"'How's your best feelin's this morning?'

"'Quite well, thank you, Martha!'

"'Will you have somethin' to take?' (East Anglian for 'Can you eat anything?')

"'Yes, please. Oh, Martha, what was it I saw?'

"'Never you mind. And don't you go tra'passin' about at night. You might come to harm.'

"Something like this, it must have been. I know Martha's sort were not extinct when I was a little boy. After this there came a gap in Miss Frost's memories of some week or so, I judge, for it must have been about the Equinox when she remembered it being so wet. It is difficult to imagine on a day like this how the first October rains come in off the sea, over Beckhythe. Little Miss Frossy was playing about the kitchen when a couple of horsemen clattered into the yard, and one of them dismounted and tilted the water out of the brim of his shiny top-hat—the sort of hat you may have seen one of the pirates wearing in Peter Pan. That, and the semi-uniform he wore, had a peculiar effect on Martha, for little Miss Frossy, clutching from shyness her big floury hand that was always warm and strong, found it cold and lifeless, fiddling with Martha's apron.

"'Good morning, Mrs. Bullen. Where's the miller?'

"'Gone to market, sir.'

"'Extraordinary thing,' remarked the gentleman; 'everyone's gone to market. Not a man in the village!'

"'Gone to sea, sir!' Martha was trembling.

"'Gone to catch the fish as they fall out of the sky, on a day like this, I warrant!'

"Martha said nothing, but Miss Frossy could feel her all a-tremble. The gentleman went on:

"'And the landlord of the Lobster Inn. Has he gone to sea too?' No answer. 'Or to market, Mrs. Bullen?'

"'To market, I should think, sir.'

"'What market?' The words came out of the gentleman's mouth with a pop, and terrified Miss Frossy as much as they appeared to terrify Martha.

"'Lynn, sir, I think.'

"'Funny, that. What market do they hold at Lynn on a Sunday?'

"'Perhaps he's gone to Easthampton, sir.'

"'Don't think so. I've just come from there. Unless he's gone by sea—eh, Mrs. Bullen?'

"Martha stood still, garping, as they say here.

"'You don't mind if we wait a bit and see if someone turns up, do you, Mrs. Bullen?'

"'Not at all, sir.'

"'No. I thought you wouldn't!' And the gentleman called out through the window to his companion:

"'Lead 'em round into the stable, Jim.'

"'Won't you take a seat, sir?' asked Martha politely, bringing forward Bullen's chair. It was one of the old fiddle-backs, with arms, and a patchwork cushion. Miss Frost remembered that. Martha set it to the right of the hearth, and the gentleman therefore faced the window. When he was seated, he spoke to her:

"'Now, what's this child doing here?'—with great emphasis.

"'This is Miss Frost, from Easthampton. The young lady from the house where I used to be in service. She's here for her health.'

"'Good day to you, Miss Frost. My name is Vardigans. Mr. Exciseman Vardigans. I hope we may be better acquainted.'

"Frossy hoped not, but it didn't seem to matter. He went on:

"'And do you wear any lace, Miss Frost?'

"'Mercy, no. What would the child do with lace?' put in Martha. Mr. Vardigans turned on her:

"'What does anybody do with it? Who does anything with it?' Martha fidgeted in silence.

"'What do you do, if I may ask, Miss Frost?'

"'She just plays about with me!' Mr. Vardigans turned sharply to Martha:

"'You haven't such a thing as a glass of spirits, Mrs. Bullen?'

"'No, sir, but you can have a glass of ale, if you like.'

"Mr. Vardigans did not answer, and Miss Frossy's attention was twitched away from wondering how Martha could tell such lies by his next question:

"'And do you sleep well o' nights, Miss Frost?'

"Miss Frost didn't answer, and Mr. Vardigans went on:

"'Curious set of children round here.



"Dimly outlined in the darkness, she only recalled one thing about it. There was no head."



Can't answer questions. As I came up the road I took a look over the bank, and found a boy in a furze-bush. What are you doing there? I ask him. Scaring birds, says he. What, birds in October, says I. Come, William, where's Bullen's Mill? says I. How do you know my name's William? says he. I guessed it, says I. Then guess the other, says he.'

"The effect of some such tirade as this upon Miss Frossy was precisely that of the snake's eye on the bird. She became fascinated, and when Mr. Vardigans suddenly stopped and turned on her with 'And do you ever see anything queer about here at nights?' there is no doubt she would have told him about the stars that went out, and the Ole Shuck Dawg. But just at that moment she was prevented. I have said that Martha had placed Mr. Vardigans facing the garden. Well, in the wall behind him was one of those meaningless little windows that you will find in old houses, looking from one room into another, lighting a cupboard, or allowing one to spy on one's visitors before one opened the door. Miss Frost had long forgotten the use of this one; she merely recalled a little square opening in the wall behind Mr. Vardigans. At the moment he asked the question what should appear in that window but a head. Nobody was visible, of course. It was Blazey's head, but the mouth and eyes, contrary to habit, were closed, and the ears pricked up, like a dog's, so that to little Miss Frossy it

signified Blazey, and no head at all, and the Headless Hound. Can you understand what she felt ? "

" Rather. Nightmares ! "

" Just so. We must give Blazey credit for a certain knowledge of children. He wanted to stop the conversation. To do so he wanted to frighten Miss Frossy. He did it so effectually that she remembered it for seventy years. At the moment she screamed, and Martha seized her in a motherly embrace and began to rate Mr. Vardigans. It was a shame, that it was, frightening the poor little thing. Martha didn't know what things were coming to, when folk went about frightening children like that, and so on, at the same time lifting the sobbing little girl and bearing her away up the stair to her own room. Removal from the face at the window and presence of Martha soon comforted her. And then she noticed that Martha, big strong Martha, who could carry her without noticing, was sitting on the floor of the bedroom beside her, white and gasping. This was mysterious, and more mysterious still the bumping and creaking that went on below in the house, people trying doors, other people walking about upstairs. Finally, there was the sound of horses clattering out of the yard, and Martha, peeping round the curtain, heaved a great sigh, and wiped her face.

" ' Stop you here ! ' she said as she left the room.

" But that was more than little Miss Frossy could do. How many minutes—a lifetime to her, no doubt—she remained alone there, in the gathering dusk, you may guess. She slipped down into the kitchen. More mysterious than ever. It was full of people. Evidently Mr. Bullen and the boys had come back quickly from Lynn, or wherever they had been. But had they been at all ? There were other men there too, that Frossy had never seen before, eating and drinking, and discussing, so far as she could make out, Mr. Vardigans, the way he had gone, and the distance he would make. Nobody paid any attention to her. Martha was very busy over by the fire, and she just slipped out into the porch, and, finding the rain abated, out into the yard.

" It was a wet lowering evening, a streak of violet in the west, and growing early dark. After the excitement of the day it seemed to her a relief to go and say good night to the cows, as they were being milked, as she had been used to do, all the summer. But no sooner did she enter the stable, at the far end of which was the cowhouse, than she stopped, petrified. There was Blazey. She could not move under his eye. She could not ask him what he was doing with Billy, the stout cobby little trotter, of that forgotten breed of ' punches ' that farmers about here used to fancy so much. Blazey didn't wait. He asked her :

" ' See what I'm a-doin' ? '

" He was swathing Billy's feet in bits of old sacking tied with straw. She couldn't guess what for. He told her.

" ' I'm tyin' 'im up where Ole Shuck Dawg bit 'im. *You mind 'e don't bite yew !* '

" She ran back to the house. The kitchen was emptying fast. Men spoke to each other in low tones, and vanished. Bullen, usually kind and jocular, seemed suddenly to remember her, and whispered a word in his wife's ear, evidently about her, and soon Martha took her upstairs, undressed her in the dark, put her to bed and lay down beside her fully clothed. Now she may or may not have gone to sleep—who would trust the memory of a child so far ? But it is certain that a little later she was awake—awake enough to know that the night was full of rumours, very dark, with an everlasting patter of raindrops off the mill sails, and the bushes in the lane. And presently the darkness and silence—and something that wasn't there—grew so oppressive that she said aloud :

" ' Martha—are you awake ? '

" ' Sh—Sh—Sh ! ' was all she got. So she lay still, and then, with a faint mutter, that might have been voices, or the wind, a tiny stir outside that might or might not be the thing that wasn't there, the Terror of the Night began to move. And in spite of Martha and her own fear, it made her sit up, just as it made the hair shiver on her head. And so, squinting out through the low window, she saw it pass. Whether man or beast, muffle-footed and loaded, really moved along the cart lane—there, that cobbled piece that joins the road—or whether it was merely the shapes that darkness makes on the undersides of the eyelids, whether she heard thudding footfall and smothered breathing, or merely her own heart beating and the blood surging in her ears, the terror passed. She tried to count the shapes—but how can you count something that isn't ?—and clung to



"Martha seized her in a motherly embrace and began to rate Mr. Vardigans."

Martha, and, one supposes, finally slept. All next day there was no Bullen, and the following day, Bullen and the boys and Blazey were back, and she was dressed and her box packed and they put her on the carrier's cart and sent her home. And the very last thing of all was, that just as the cart topped the rise, she saw, sitting here, very much where we are sitting, Blazey. He said never a word. He just shut his mouth and eyes and erected his ears. That was the last she ever saw of him. She went home to Easthampton, and never mentioned a word of what she had seen.

"Well, Acts of Parliament were passed, manners and customs altered, the whole atmosphere of that incident borders on the ridiculous. But, as late as the 'nineties, when I came over here to see the old lady who had been little Miss Frossy, who, since that time, had had three-quarters of a century to learn all about superstitions and the use smugglers made of them—and the use they made of dogs and punches and church towers—in spite of the prosaic rationalistic knowledge that flourished in that decade—I remember that she still shivered when she told me parts of the story. Which shows how impressionable children are, and what a deal of reason it takes to obliterate an image, once formed in their minds, like that of the Headless Hound."

MISS HUMPETY COMES TO TEA.

THE dogs are barking, there's somebody coming—
Children, run to the window and see,
Is the rag-man, or is the tag-man,
Or is it Miss Humpety coming to tea ?

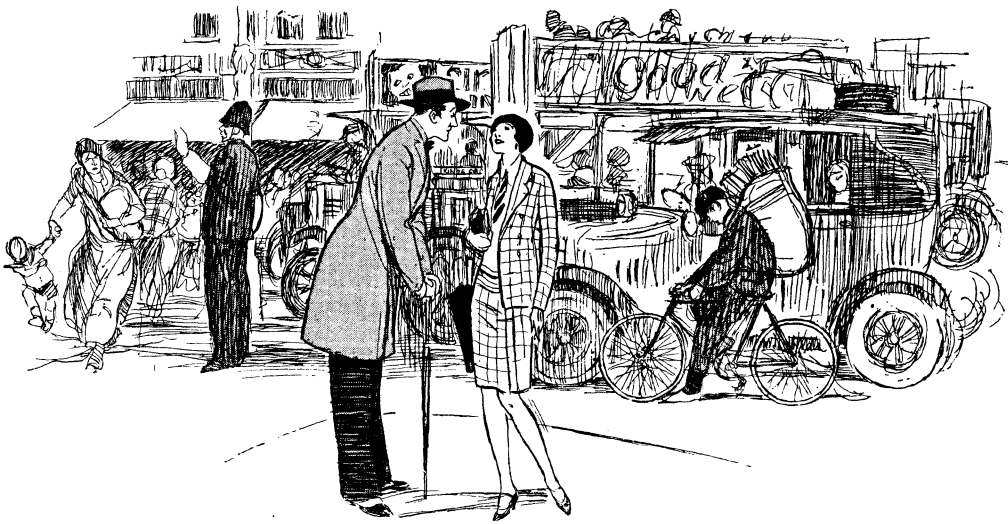
O, it's Miss Humpety, look at her, children,
A little round dumpety figure of fun,
Her cheeks are like apples, her lips are like cherries,
Her hair done up tight like a bakery bun.

Stir up the fire and put on the kettle,
We'll let the hard-knuckled rain beat at the door,
Sweep off the hearth-stone and gather around her,
She'll tell the same stories she's told us before.

Forget it is raining—forget it is winter—
Forget that the flour be scarce in the bin,
Look at Miss Humpety purple with laughter
Who once was a rack-o'-bones, she was so thin.

But she laughed, and she laughed, and she kept right on laughing,
Children, let's laugh 'til our ribs rock with glee,
It's better than rhubarb, it's better than quinine
To have dear Miss Humpety coming to tea.

GRACE NOLL CROWELL.



"Mr. Ardargh cried in great astonishment, 'Miss Staimer—Edna! How extraordinary; fancy meeting you.'"

MR. REGINALD ARDARGH

By LAURENCE MEYNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY TREYER EVANS

MR. REGINALD ARDARGH felt the caress of his silken underwear, admired the tightness of his rolled umbrella, saw the shininess of his shoes, and in the pleasant sun of a spring morning he felt life to be good. Quite good. Was there not the stage of London to strut upon and all people to admire him?

Not many yards ahead he caught sight of a tweed coat and skirt and of well-shaped legs approaching him. Mr. Ardargh dwelt on those legs; legs were his speciality (legs, indeed, had been the first cause of the unfortunate muddle with Joan—but foolish to think of that now); it so happened that he knew the legs that, beneath the tweed coat and skirt, were now approaching him. Approaching him fast; he had only just time to halt abruptly on the pavement edge and to apostrophise a police constable on point duty:

"White-gloved conductor with majestic beat
Of that unfailing nocturne—Regent Street——"

A voice at his shoulder: a hat there too, grey felt twisted in the appropriate places: underneath, an amused face.

"Mr. Ardargh, you do the most *original* things. I wonder what you were thinking of then."

Mr. Ardargh ceased to beat time (as he had begun to do) with his tightly rolled umbrella and cried in great astonishment, "Miss Staimer—Edna! How extraordinary; fancy meeting you." He passed a thin hand with tapered nails quickly over his eyes as though forcibly to obliterate the private vision of the poetic meadows which

he had been enjoying. "Tweeds," he cried, suddenly aware of his companion again. "How hearty, how encouraging. How inextricably bound up with strenuous things. I picture you on your way to guns, dogs, partridges——"

"Partridge shooting was over long ago," Miss Staimer said, laughing.

Mr. Ardargh fetched a sigh. "Everything is always over," he said, regarding his tightly rolled umbrella with downward glance, "except the tragedies of life."

"Cheer up."

"Wine remains," Mr. Ardargh said, permitting the ghost, but no more than the ghost, of a smile to play across his face. "Wine remains, Miss Staimer (or surely, by now, I may say Edna). Would you so favour me as to drink a cocktail at Vanner's?"

"I should love to," Edna said, laughing and slightly flushed.

Mr. Ardargh regarded the tawny orange-coloured drink in his small glass thoughtfully. "Liquid fire" would be a good description of it, he pondered, or "dissolved flame"; he wondered which would impress Edna the more.

"You looked as though you were reciting something when I came up to you," she said; "do tell me what it was."

"Oh, that!" Mr. Ardargh gave a little shrug and moved his hands in a gentle, depreciatory protest that showed his nails to advantage. "Nothing, dear lady, nothing."

"But do tell me—please."

"Only two lines of a sonnet I am composing; the policeman regulating the traffic made me think of it:

"'White-gloved conductor with majestic beat
Of that unfailing nocturne—Regent Street.'"

There was a pause. "How—how extraordinary," Edna said. "I think it must be wonderful to be able to write poetry like that."

Mr. Ardargh glanced down his nose, a long, thin nose, aquiline in shape. He sipped a little of his tawny drink. Now, here (he thought), with this strange tweed-covered creature, worlds apart though they were, he could yet get *en rapport*, establish some common ground. Wonderful gift (he reflected) to be able to compel admiration from so many and so widely differing people. How ridiculous of Joan, then, not to see his point of view; how preposterous that he had ever imagined himself marrying anyone so unappreciative; certainly he would write that letter. . . . He became aware of Edna's eyes studying him, time obviously to play another move in the game. "All morning," he said, "has been but a preparation for this pleasure."

"But you didn't know you were going to meet me," Edna said.

"I hoped, dear lady. I had hopes." For a full instant he let his eyes, those unfailing eyes, rest on those of his companion. Edna looked away, slightly confused. What can you expect, thought Mr. Ardargh, from anyone who wears tweeds? And yet (he comforted himself), and yet she has notable legs.

"I really think I ought to be going," Edna said, gathering her bag, her gloves, her dwarf umbrella. "I've got heaps of shopping to do."

Mr. Ardargh rose, his whole body one eloquent curve of regret. Shopping (he thought), how truly tweedish. "At least," he said, smiling mournfully, "you have cheered me up."

"I'm glad of that. But were you depressed?"

Mr. Ardargh smiled and slowly shook his head as who would say, "Have no fear that I shall burden you with my troubles."

"It's always depressing to be misunderstood—don't you find that?"

Like a true Englishwoman, Edna was inclined to be embarrassed by the question. "I'm afraid I'm not very much good at understanding people," she said.

"Ah, you!" Mr. Ardargh replied in his soft, caressing voice. "But you have no need to be . . ."

"Good-bye, Mr. Ardargh, and thank you so much."

"Good-bye, dear lady. I walk with fresh hope. Good-bye."

Certainly (Mr. Ardargh thought as he continued his stroll), certainly I shall write that letter. Among other reasons he knew that Joan would be expecting one; it was now two weeks since he had written; and the last of the three letters which he had received from her in the meantime had been full of gentle hints about his silence—oh, those gentle hints, how he hated them! Why couldn't she be defiantly and outrageously rude? Why ever not, and then things would be much easier for him. No one could accuse a man of infidelity because he refused to put up with an unreasonable quarrelsome letter; and it would be so easy to write one. He himself could write an unreasonable quarrelsome letter out of hand. "Dear Miss

Stuart," it would start. "Dear Miss Stuart" (no; that would sound as though he were determined to quarrel). "My dear Joan," then, "even the least congenial of my friends



"'Dear lady, the entire morning has been but a preparation for this moment.'"

agree——" Mr. Ardargh smiled as he composed that line in his head. "Least congenial" he recognised as the influence of Edna Staimer. What an impossible dullard the girl was, and yet what charming legs—

legs that reminded him of something; and he glanced suddenly at the tiny octagonal watch on his wrist. Twenty minutes to one. He had said the "Portobello" at one o'clock; unless he were careful he might be in time. He decreased his pace; it was his habit to arrive for every appointment exactly five minutes late. People said it was eccentric.

Angela Fordonne glanced at her watch as he came into the restaurant. "Your usual five minutes," she exclaimed; "you eccentric person, why do you do it?"

"With most people," Mr. Ardargh said, entrusting his hat and his tightly rolled umbrella to the care of an attentive waiter, "it is merely to put off the evil hour; but when I am going to meet you it is only to prolong the pleasures of anticipation."

"We always meet in restaurants," Angela said.

Reginald Ardargh shrugged his æsthetic shoulders. "It is a preposterous business," he said, "this stuffing food down a hole in one's face."

"Menu, sir?"

Mr. Ardargh took the menu from the waiter.

"Eating should be done alone," he said, "except" (and his eyes, those unfailing eyes, softened towards Angela)—"except when the company is so good as to enhance even the gross bestiality of eating. Let me see—ah—um—may I suggest? I have a motif running in my head that I should like to translate into terms of food, too subtle perhaps for most people, but of course you will understand. There is grape fruit and smoked salmon, of course; and then I think duck with the greenest of green peas——"

"For envy?"

He laughed; he had not thought of that. "How quick you are," he said. "How well you understand."

In due time wine also was brought, wine redder than a winter's sunset.

"Dear lady," Mr. Ardargh said as they raised their glasses and looked steadily in one another's eyes, "the entire morning has been but a preparation for this moment."

"You have not diversified it with any preliminary incident?"

Mr. Ardargh looked shocked at the suggestion.

"You are such a—shall I say—*versatile* ladies' man, that one never knows," Angela explained.

Mr. Ardargh looked pleased at the innuendo. "But I have little time for diversions nowadays; my work keeps me busy. Have you seen my last book of poems?"

"Ydrasil?"

"It seemed to be the only fitting title."

"Oh, rather. I thought it immensely clever. I really did, Reginald, the similes are so extraordinary; rather *too* far-fetched and striking if anything. Do tell me one thing."

Mr. Ardargh smiled and waited with upraised questioning eyebrows.

"Who was the girl in that sonnet, 'The Lacquered Lady,' meant to be?"

Mr. Ardargh's smile remained; his eyebrows were still raised.

"Oh, but do tell me."

To Mr. Ardargh's smile and eyebrows were added now the surrendering gesture of his outspread hands. "You embarrass me." Under the table his pointed polished shoe pressed a smaller firmer one; their eyes met.

"And you," Angela asked, withdrawing her foot, "I wonder if you admire my work?"

(Heavens, the girl works, Mr. Ardargh thought, feeling unsuccessfully for her foot again.) "Surely," he said, "who would not?"

"You saw my picture at the Academy?"

"Until I saw it I feared the Academy was going to be its usual self—the premier bore of the season; but your picture saved it."

"You really liked it? I am so glad. What did you admire most in it, I wonder?"

Mr. Ardargh's white, tapering hands were busy at once illustrating the intangibility, the inexpressibility, of these ineffable things. "The colour, of course," he said with decision, "the composition, the tone, the *texture* as it were. It had that supreme hall-mark of a great picture," he said, seeing with gratitude an escape into the empyrean air of metaphor; "indeed, the hall-mark of any great work of art, that it makes one immediately think of it as translated into the terms of another medium."

Angela Fordonne looked vastly interested; but not, Mr. Ardargh was relieved to observe, vastly intelligent.

"Do go on, Reginald," she begged; "it's frightfully interesting. You really liked my picture, then?"

"It made me think in terms of music," Mr. Ardargh declared; "not the sombre brown Gregorian of some depressing moralist, but 'the crimson blaring of a shawm'—you know that wonderful line? Crimson blaring exactly expresses my reaction to your canvas; you know what I mean, I feel sure."

"I'm glad you liked it," was all Angela said; but her foot found its way back to his.

"And now," she added, "I must go back to the studio and work."

"Work!" The word appalled Mr. Ardargh.

Angela nodded. "What you have said has helped me enormously," she said; "it is such a relief to get intelligent criticism now and again."

Outside the "Portobello" Mr. Ardargh bent over her hand. "Good-bye, dear lady," he said (just the slightest answer—he thought—to the pressure of his fingers); "perhaps once again for lunch, some day when your art will not claim you all afternoon?"

wielded by his white and admired fingers.

"MY DEAR JOAN,—You must surely see the madness of any attempt at permanent accord between us, and the unfairness, moreover, of holding me to a promise—a mere rash word—spoken at random in the passion of a moment——"



"Mr. Ardargh bent low over the outstretched fingers. 'Dear lady,' he said, 'the day begins.'"

"Oh, I should love to," she cried. 'Good-bye."

"Good-bye, dear lady, good-bye."

Mr. Ardargh turned and sauntered along the pleasantly warm afternoon street. More clearly than ever he foresaw that letter taking reality from the mauve feather pen

Amazing—Mr. Ardargh broke off his epistolary imaginings to reflect—amazing how cumbersomely serious some girls will be over this matter of passion. A man sustains a motoring accident in the most rural of rural spots, the most pigs-and-cows and duck-pond atmosphere possible: the village rectory is

good to him : a solid gloomy house, but with white linen and lavender and rest for the intolerably aching hurt ; the over-cheerful doctor, smelling of dogs and stables, gives a verdict of three weeks at least ; in return for hospitality and care Mr. Ardargh had tried to brighten the rectory table with the embellishments of his wit (and succeeded, he felt convinced, admirably) ; and not only the table but, being in generous mood, the rectory life generally. How unreasonable that a man's actions in that charitable endeavour should be taken too seriously ; that the well-turned phrases, borrowing, perhaps, a little romance and passion from the flower-filled, moon-splashed garden, should be stored up by the girl as heartfelt truths. By some idiocy, which now seemed merely laughable, Mr. Ardargh had been inveigled into the stupidity of an engagement—ah, the very word made him shudder as he thought of it, walking along the sunny London street. Engaged ; married ; jollity ; *blah, blah, blah ;* relatives ; heartiness ; square meals at regular times ; long domestic evenings . . . Mr. Ardargh was shocked at the selfishness of a character that could ask him to share these things.

At five minutes past four Mr. Ardargh was shown into the purple-walled drawing-room of the smallest house in Mount Wynoc Street.

" Mr. Ardargh, madam."

" Bring tea, Thérèse."

" Madam."

As soon as the maid-barring door was shut Mr. Ardargh bent low over the outstretched fingers. " Dear lady," he said, " the day begins."

Mrs. Westnorry smiled at him. She had an oval face, its pallor accentuated by the jet blackness of her hair and eyebrows ; her eyes were deep and cozening. A hungry-looking woman. She lay on a red leather couch, and for a dress she was wrapped in a quaint Japanese gown of imperial yellow with three purple storks flapping determinedly across it. One stork on her breast, another at the base of her neck, a third flying straight down her back.

Mr. Ardargh settled himself on a hassock near her. " What a divinely restful room this is," he said. " I come to you for rest, Rachael."

" For rest ? " she asked, black eyebrows arched. " And is that all, Reginald ? "

" There is turmoil," Mr. Ardargh extricated himself, " which by its very intensity is refreshing, just as a discord may charm the ear more than placid harmony."

Mrs. Westnorry took a fat, stumpy cigarette from an ebony box at her elbow and held it up for a light. Mr. Ardargh arose and in his thin twentieth-century hands cupped the miracle of fire.

" You have had a tiring day ? " she asked, blowing a cloud of smoke in the air and looking at him through the insubstantiality of it.

Mr. Ardargh's hands, eyebrows, the very poise of his head, all combined in a gesture which meant—why ask me to explain the obvious ? " Any day must be tiring," he said, " when one is waiting for some particular moment in it, as I have been for this."

Mrs. Westnorry smiled at him, a long, lazy smile like slumbering fire in her deep eyes. " Sit down, Reginald," she said softly. " I believe you like me a little."

Tea was brought and Mrs. Westnorry casually administered it.

" You have been anywhere to-day," she asked, " seen anyone, done anything ? "

Mr. Ardargh rehearsed the troublesome interviews of the day. " A tweedy person first " (he said), " incredibly irresponsive ; as I looked at her I expected any moment dogs to bay, guns to explode, horses' hooves to stamp. But she had one wonderfully redeeming feature—her legs."

Mrs. Westnorry, staring up at the blue ceiling, powdered with faint gold stars, smiled. " And next ? " she asked.

" Ah, next," Mr. Ardargh continued, appealing for especial sympathy with an outstretched hand, " next, *per contra*, someone pre-eminently un-tweedy, positively reeking of Chelsea ; the *bad* Chelsea," he added, suddenly a trifle vague as to the exact postal address of Mount Wynoc Street itself, " the Chelsea that is so boringly self-centred. All through lunch she talked of nothing but her own work, and how it interested her and what it meant to her. I had to pretend to be interested, of course, but actually I had only the vaguest idea what her work is—pictures of some sort, one gathered. I spoke in a vaguely appropriate way. So unlike you, Rachael ; now you have the trick of sympathy——"

" No trick, my friend," Mrs. Westnorry said, glancing at him. Mr. Ardargh looked down on that ivory pale face set in the vivid blackness of hair ; his gaze wandered from the dark and cozening eyes to the full lips bright as a red wound against the pale cheeks.

"No; no tricks," he agreed (wondering whether the pallor were wholly natural or induced), "just consummate beauty."

Mrs. Westnorry smiled her pleasure. "You think that, Reginald?" she asked.

Mr. Ardargh took the opportunity to imprint an impassioned kiss on the first purple stork. "Chypré," he thought as his lips touched the Japanese wrap. "Good heavens, I thought that had gone out of fashion long ago."



"'Ah, dear lady, there you are. I have been searching everywhere for that notable splash of colour that your rose gives.'"

At half-past six Mr. Ardargh left the smallest house in Mount Wynoc Street and walked meditatively along that street in the direction of his own flat. On his way he passed Westnorry homeward bound. Mr. Ardargh gravely saluted, but for several reasons he did not stop to speak; for one thing, he was deeply concerned about the composition of the now obviously inevitable letter. He was puzzling whether to use the word "housemaid" or not; it might seem a trifle unnecessarily tart perhaps, but on the other hand undeniably there was a certain savour about it, a certain relish, no question but that it would get home. Mr. Ardargh laughed—no gentle hints for him. "Dear Joan" (it would run, then), "since you obviously do not want an intelligent man of the world for a husband, nor I a mere housemaid for wife——" Ah, that was it, incomparable opening. It might even come in time to be quoted as a model letter for A Young Man wishing to Extricate Himself from an Unfavourable Alliance.

He reached the flat, and on letting himself in immediately summoned his man.

"Andrew, pen, ink and writing-paper. I wish to write a letter."

"Very good, sir."

"And—Andrew."

"Sir?"

"A whisky-and-soda, a large one."

"Immediately, sir."

Mr. Ardargh sat down and with Andrew's efficient help surrounded himself with the materials proper to letter-writing: a whisky-and-soda, a large one; a mauve feather pen; pale cream paper; and his thoughts.

"The evening post, sir," said Andrew. Mr. Ardargh took the solitary letter. The writing seemed queerly familiar. Now who—why, of course, *of course*. Oh, this was exquisite, this was too funny. Now, with all appositeness, he could use that phrase which he had always longed to employ: "Yours of even date to hand." A very remarkable phrase, thought Mr. Ardargh, as he slit open the envelope. "Yours of even date to hand."

He read the letter:

MY DEAREST REGINALD,—

Please do not think I am going to worry you with any more letters; this is the last. It is nearly three weeks since you wrote to me, although I implored you, and you promised, to write at least twice a week. And I felt when I read your last letter that you would never write any more; and that, if you did, it would be an unkind letter, a beastly one. I suppose a girl can't help knowing when a man just gets tired of her. But, Reginald dear, why is it? That is what I cannot help asking myself—why is it? I have not changed an atom since in the garden I told you that I loved you, nor ever shall change. And if you loved me then, as you swore you did, I cannot understand how you have changed.

I cannot think of love that could die so soon; my love for you will never die. If you did not love me, Reginald, then in the name of all women I implore you not to do to another girl what you have done to me, for you built an image in my heart and now you have broken both; both the image and my heart.

Dearest Reginald, if it is because you are in any difficulty, or in trouble with another woman such as men get into, oh, dearest Reginald, don't keep away from me for that; don't kill me, Reginald, because you fear I would not forgive.

I should never ask to know anything of your life in London or of your friends. On my knees, Reginald, I beg you to believe that I would even share you. I would not be jealous. I only ask a little of that love that you promised me.

My love will never change.

JOAN.

P.S.—Do not send my photo back, Reginald; keep it, keep it.

Mr. Ardargh looked up from perusing this communication. "Andrew," he said, after a pause, "take everything away. I shall not write a letter after all."

"Very good, sir."

For a minute or two Mr. Ardargh was thoughtful, then he spoke again. "By the way, Andrew."

"Sir?"

"When I came back after my accident and you unpacked, did you come across any sort of photograph amongst my things?"

"Yes, sir. Of a young lady, sir."

"Ah—and you put it, where?"

"On your dressing-table, sir."

"My dressing-table—is it there now?"

"No, sir. A week ago I found it in the waste-paper basket and, concluding it had been put there purposely, removed it."

"You did quite right, Andrew. Bring me another drink and see that my clothes are laid out at once."

"Very good, sir."

So draws Mr. Ardargh's day to a close with the overshadowing letter still unwritten, now, indeed, not at all to be written. But one more glimpse we must have of him. Mr. Ardargh, then, towards midnight at the buffet of Lady Altimorn's dance, dealing with one of many "revivers" and being saluted by a friend.

"You're looking very bucked with life, Reginald."

Mr. Ardargh waved those white expressive hands in explanatory self-defence. "One can't parade private griefs," he protested with quiet manliness; and then, as no tentative half-query was forthcoming, he had to go on, "but one feels them just the same."

"Oh, quite. Sorry, I didn't know——"

Mr. Ardargh quickly laid a detaining hand on the departing shoulder. "Oh, I suppose one shouldn't worry about these things," he said with the attempted laugh of bravery. "The usual tale, you know, a woman——"

"Ah."

"And the usual way—abruptly. A man does his best, he bares his heart, makes his promises, keeps true allegiance, and then, after being encouraged in everything, gets curt dismissal. Almost," Mr. Ardargh said, with the appropriate stricture in his voice, "almost it makes one despair of human nature."

"Too bad," sympathised his detained friend. "Ah, the music. I must be off."

Mr. Ardargh nodded abstractedly; and, after an appropriate interval, from nodding fell to earnest consultation of his programme.

"No. 5. Silver tulle rose on shoulder." Silver tulle; rose on shoulder. He had not

known her name, nor had he caught it clearly at their introduction; but her appearance had been pleasing even to his connoisseur's eyes; there was something about the swing of the body from the hips, something about the spareness, the taut vitality of the shimmering legs——

"Ah, dear lady, there you are. I have been searching everywhere for that notable splash of colour that your rose gives, as though it had been dabbled in every heart that has bled for you."

"How extravagant you are." She leant her arched and vibrant body to his hold and they commenced to move round the room together.

In silence for a minute or two. Then she glanced up to say, "You dance very well. You are enjoying this?"

Mr. Ardargh's well-brushed eyebrows went up in amused dismay for the dismal inadequacy of the word. "*Enjoy?*" he said. "I have had the dullest of days, dear lady; all the long hours of it have been but an uninteresting prologue for this exquisite moment."

She smiled up at him; and he, with those unfailing eyes, down again at her.

THE BOOK LOVER.

THE reading public of the Nation
Who make good books their recreation
Are mainly far too poor or thrifty
To freely pay "two dollars, fifty"-
Which is what people gladly pay
For novels out in U.S.A.
In fact, new fiction published here
Is seven and six—not quite so dear.
And yet, with odd exception we
All borrow from a library.
And those few people, like myself,
Who must have books upon their shelf,
Will find that saying driven home—
"In Rome do as they do in Rome."
For if you don't, all friends who've not 'em
Will borrow when they know you've got 'em.
For instance now, there's my friend Jim;
I've just been forced to say to *him*,
"I should be grateful if you can
Lend me some of my books, old man."
He's even worse than my ten cousins
Who take them home in baker's dozens,
Coveys, clutches, and grand slams:
And lend them to their pas and mams.
The other day I ran to earth
A first edition of some worth.
The culprit wrote, "Your book—regret
Cook hasn't finished with it yet."
I've country friends who every night
Read books in bed by candle-light.
And my books prove, without a doubt,
Just how they snuff the candle out.
And other borrowers, I feel,
Say, "Good dog, good dog, bring to heel."
Alas, it's not so much the cost—
He who loves books has loved and lost.

GILBERT ASHBARRY.

THE GOLDEN SILENCE OF LIEUTENANT CHUDLEIGH

By G. B. JOHNSON

ILLUSTRATED BY L. G. ILLINGWORTH

PERSONAL afflictions often have their compensation. The blind man, for instance, usually has a love of music, and at least misses the comic dramas from Hollywood. The deaf person, living in a peaceful though isolated haven of his own, is not disturbed by loud noises from the exhaust gases of motor cycles or Moscow. Tom Chudleigh's stammer was partly balanced, for himself, by a keen sense of humour. To his friends, however, and he made friends everywhere, both qualities were in the same pan of the scale, and jointly furnished hilarious entertainment to all—all but old Sock-Eye.

Tom himself thought fate had dealt him more kicks than aces. He would gladly have exchanged his rôle of funny man for a proper control of his vocal organs, and sometimes thought of himself as the court jester whose apparent levity hid a bruised and sensitive spirit. For this cursed stammer, amusing as it might be to others—and he made an open jest of it and often used it as a foil to sharpen the point of his wit—would without a doubt retard and perhaps end his career in the profession he loved well. Without it he was convinced he had it in him to succeed. Because of it nothing seemed to go right.

In particular, there was a noticeable lack of decision and snap in his words of command which suggested the hesitating doubts of a misfiring engine.

Under the tolerant eye of Major Cummings, the O.C. of "X" Field Company of the Royal Sappers, stationed at Barcester, he was one day putting his unit through their paces on the barrack square.

"C-C-Company," he shouted in a deep but jerky voice, "b-b-by the left, quick——"

With his mouth stretched open to its utmost limit, like a fledgling about to welcome the early worm, and a look of startled apprehension in his eyes, his Adam's-apple slid up and down like the sleeve-valve of a motor engine, but no further sound was heard. The line, wavering in unstable equilibrium on its toes for the step forward, partly overbalanced itself and partly sank back on its heels. Straight as a ruler before it shifted into the semblance of Sir Harry Lauder's walking-stick.

"—march!" The word burst out unexpectedly with a report that startled the Company. They scrambled forward in an irregular line entirely foreign to the usual machine-like precision customary in those polished surroundings.

But it is one thing to start your men moving in one direction and another to get them back again. At the end of the parade ground was a stone wall towards which the Company was rapidly marching. The danger was obvious. Chudleigh made frantic attempts to shout the command that would halt or turn the advancing line, but only a sibilant whisper rewarded him.

They continued their rapid progress up to the wall. They couldn't retire without orders, and they could advance no farther. They came to a halt of their own accord. Which shows the degree of initiative and common sense instilled into our post-war Army. They were finally extricated from this painful position (the prickly herbaceous border was being ruined too) by that ever-present help in time of tangled trouble, the Sergeant-Major.

Naturally, that was the day that old Sock-Eye would choose to come on the scene and observe from one side of the square the chaotic results of a lion-hearted effort on the part of this young subaltern. Tom noticed his presence with dismay. For the fierce, shaggy-eyed Colonel was a man of different calibre from the easy-going O.C. He had the pink face and the frigid, protruding eyes of a Hudson Bay salmon of the "Sock-Eye" grade. Anyone in the line of fire of those popping optics shrivelled up and felt every inch a worm, and as he had spent most of his days at the War Office, his ideas of discipline were of the most repellent description.

And it was to the jolly and delightful young daughter of this blood-and-iron martinet that Tom Chudleigh had plighted his youthful affections. He loved her dearly and she returned the tender feeling in kind. The menacing figure that blocked the path to their beckoning love-nest, however, was the formidable old man. No word had yet been spoken to him, but he had dropped more than one hint, in the blunt accents of an honest soldier, that Chudleigh's attentions to Joanna must become less frequent and his intentions less personal. The Colonel's eagle eye, trained to sight trouble a long way off, had spotted the drift of things, and he made it clear that young Chudleigh was not in the running and never would be.

"What shall we do, Tom?" she asked him anxiously one night at the monthly dance at the Garrison Club. They were in a secluded corner of the smoking-room. "Dad's a dear old thing really, but I know he'll have a fit and refuse to allow us even to meet if he knows we've hit it off."

"Are you s-s-sure, darling, he doesn't suspect already that there's a m-m-menace to his happiness l-lurking in the shadows?"

"He may suspect but he can't be certain."

"He suspects all right. Look here, Joanna old thing. I'll go and s-s-see him on S-Sunday and pour out my heart. When he knows we've c-c-clicked, we'll learn the worst and then p-p-prepare for a m-m-massed attack."

"Oh, Tom, you dear. But why not go to-day and get it over? Now I know you're going to do it I can't bear the suspense."

"He's upset just now and I f-f-fear the worst. The O.C. told me your f-f-father got a hot wire to-day from the War Office about the h-h-heavy cost of the new mouse-traps for 'K' Company c-c-cook-house. There's a pile of c-c-correspondence about it, and the matter m-may go to the Army Council."

"Well, I suppose you'll have to put it off, then; but how absurd that a thing like that should make any difference."

Tom drew himself up.

"Hold hard, my g-g-good woman," he said sternly; "you f-f-forget yourself. And you the d-d-daughter of the regiment, as it were. You should know that little things like l-l-love and m-m-marriage must linger t-t-till weighty affairs, like mouse-traps, are disposed of. I'll call on S-S-Sunday at tea-time and b-beard the heavy father in his den. I love that little curl over your ear."

They whispered to each other and then, after a long, affectionate kiss of undying devotion (the room was otherwise empty), parted for the night.

The following Sunday afternoon Tom Chudleigh, outwardly calm but with a sick sensation under his waistcoat, made his way to the leafy avenue in which Colonel Baker and his motherless daughter dispensed exclusive hospitality. He rang the bell and informed the maid who answered it that he would like to see the Colonel on a private matter. He was shown into the smoking-room.

In a minute old Sock-Eye (he was ever punctual) strode into the room. Under his shaggy eyebrows his eyes pierced the young man with a penetrating stare.

"Well, Chudleigh, how are you? I hear you want to see me privately. Have a cup of tea."

"Thank you, sir. I d-d-don't mind if I do."

The Colonel rang the bell and ordered tea. When it arrived he plunged straight into action.

"Well, Chudleigh, what is it?"

"It's like this, sir. I know it's fearful cheek and all that s-s-sort of rot, but I l-l-love Joanna and I've come here to ask you——"

"It's no use, my dear fellow," interrupted

the Colonel; "Joanna's my only daughter and I'll never give my consent to her marrying you.

"This is an occasion when it is necessary to be quite frank, and I must tell you straight," he went on warmly, "that you're the worst officer that I've ever had the misfortune to have in my command."

Tom had long suspected that that was the Colonel's opinion of him, but confirmation, and that from the highest quarter, came as a bitter blow. There had always been that slight margin of doubt that buoys one up, as in the case of a ticket-holder in the Calcutta Sweep, until the evil hour of disillusionment.

"With your perpetual grin and the unfortunate impediment in your speech," the Colonel went on, "you remind me of a—a—hesitating hyena."

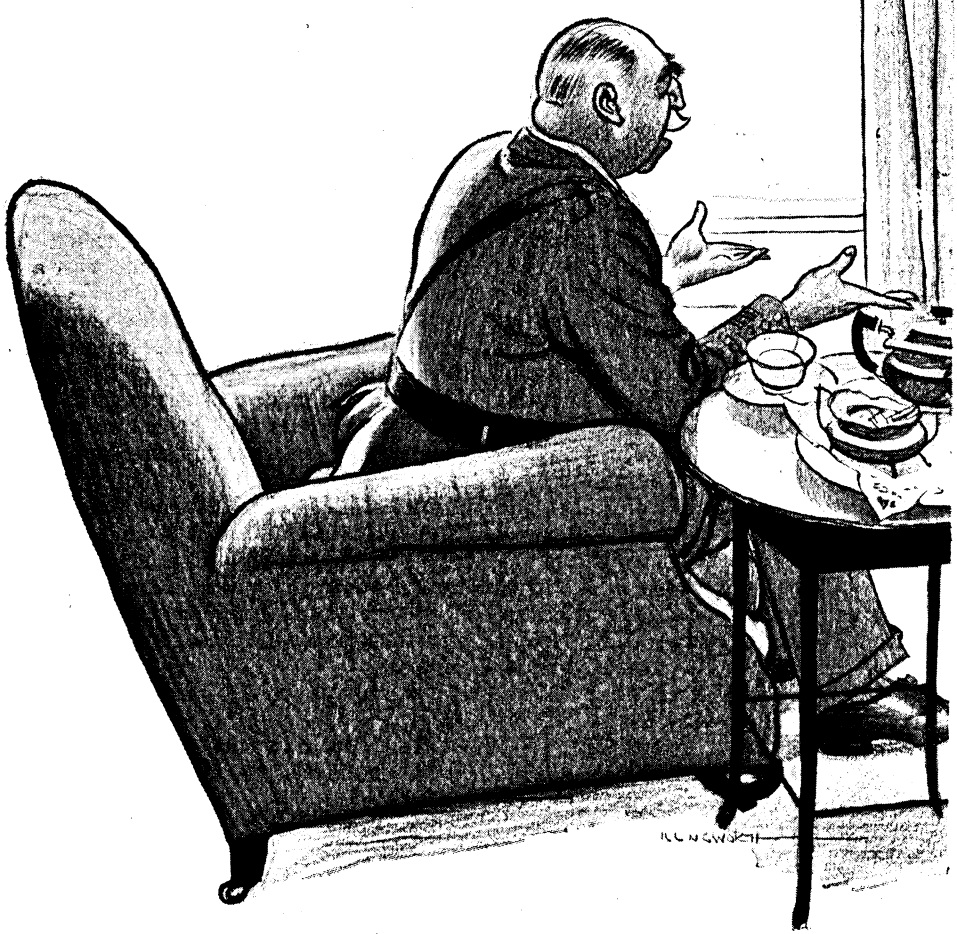
"I've no d-d-doubt, Colonel, that even hesitating hyenas were put in this world to serve a useful p-p-purpose," replied Tom reproachfully.

"Yes, my boy," the old man replied more kindly, "on the music-hall stage but not in the British Army. Why don't you do something to cure that infernal stuttering?"

"Everything has been tried, Sock — Colonel, but marriage."

"Well, you can take it from me that *my* daughter's not going to hold the medicine bottle."

"But I should like you t-t-to know, Cur-nell," continued Chudleigh eagerly, "that I'm making a really gallant attempt to c-c-cure myself. Among other things I'm t-t-taking a strong tuttonic morning, noon and night."



"You need it. I think you have the makings of a good officer if you can get rid of some of your defects. One of them is your levity. You don't seem to realise that the British Army is no place for buffoons. Mind you, Chudleigh, I don't object to ordinary high spirits in my young officers. I remember when I was young," he continued with a regretful and reminiscent gleam in his eyes,



"'This is an occasion when it is necessary to be quite frank, and I must tell you straight,' he went on warmly, 'that you're the worst officer that I've ever had the misfortune to have in my command.'"

"I used to hit the high spots a bit myself."

"Oh, tut, tut, tut——!"

"What's that?"

"For a moment my s-s-stammer got the better of me. I was about to say 'youth will be served!'"

The Colonel looked at him with suspicion, but let it pass. After more conversation in which he showed himself to be almost human, he got up. Tom, sad but determined, removed himself from the presence.

Up to this period of his life he could not claim to have made a really heroic and sustained effort to cure his stammer. He now saw that the situation demanded serious attention. In the estimation of the Colonel, although he did himself an injustice, he stood less than nowhere. Accordingly he applied himself with zeal and thoroughness to the course of treatment recently recommended to him and faithfully absorbed the noxious tonic which was the principal part of the cure. Whether the effect was due to a temporary drugging of that jumpy branch of his nervous system attached to the vocal regions, or to a permanent toning up of the whole works, he could not decide. But at any rate the impediment from which he had suffered from boyhood began to show distinct signs of submission, and at last his speech flowed as smoothly as oil. With that at the moment he was well content.

One morning after this happy result had been achieved the officers of the Company assembled in the Orderly Room at ten o'clock for the usual business and batch of "crimes." After the last of the criminals was disposed of and marched out, Major Cummings addressed the group of standing officers. He was a tall, thin man, universally known as "Spindle," for his legs were so slender that they looked as if they had been drawn, in a semi-molten state, through a table-napkin ring and then allowed to harden. Chudleigh had been so fascinated by his first sight of Spindle's legs that he had expressed the fear that the police might gather him in for having no visible means of support.

"Well, gentlemen," he said, "you know the annual inspection by the Colonel takes place on the 25th. Detailed orders will be sent to each of you by the Adjutant, so I just want to say now that you, Mr. Chudleigh, will take command of the mounted section, and you, Mr. Tomlinson, will have the unmounted section and the firing of the mine. The others will take their usual places. Needless to say, I want the Company to do itself credit, and I think it will. That will be all this morning."

With that the others saluted and left the room to carry on their day's duties.

The morning of the inspection at length dawned. Chudleigh in his quarters was stropping his safety razor when the blade, turning over for the next sweep along the strop, caught the first knuckle of his left forefinger and cut it deep down to the bone.

"Damn!" he murmured softly, "that's the worst of these safety razors."

After breakfast he went to the doctor to have it dressed. It was a nasty cut and bled freely.

He appeared on parade with a bandage over the hand from which the ends of the fingers alone were free. Spindle seemed concerned and advised him not to draw his sword for the Colonel's inspection so that he might have his right hand free the better to manage his mettlesome horse.

That horse was another cause of friction between Chudleigh and Colonel Baker. Sock-Eye fancied himself as a judge of a horse, and when he first saw the absurd animal with which the young officer had provided himself, without consulting him as he should have done, he expressed unmeasured disapproval. It had a nervous temperament and a mouth as hard as vulcanite.

The Company marched out of the town several miles to Puddlewick, a great open common devoted to military exercises, and were drawn up in Review Order, with Lieutenant Chudleigh at the head of the mounted section. Disregarding the O.C.'s advice, he drew his sword. It was the usual thing to do. A sheathed sword would have drawn unfavourable comment from the Colonel. The latter rode up on his prancing charger, a fine though small figure of a spit-and-polish soldier, took up his place at the saluting base attended by Major Cummings, and the exercises began.

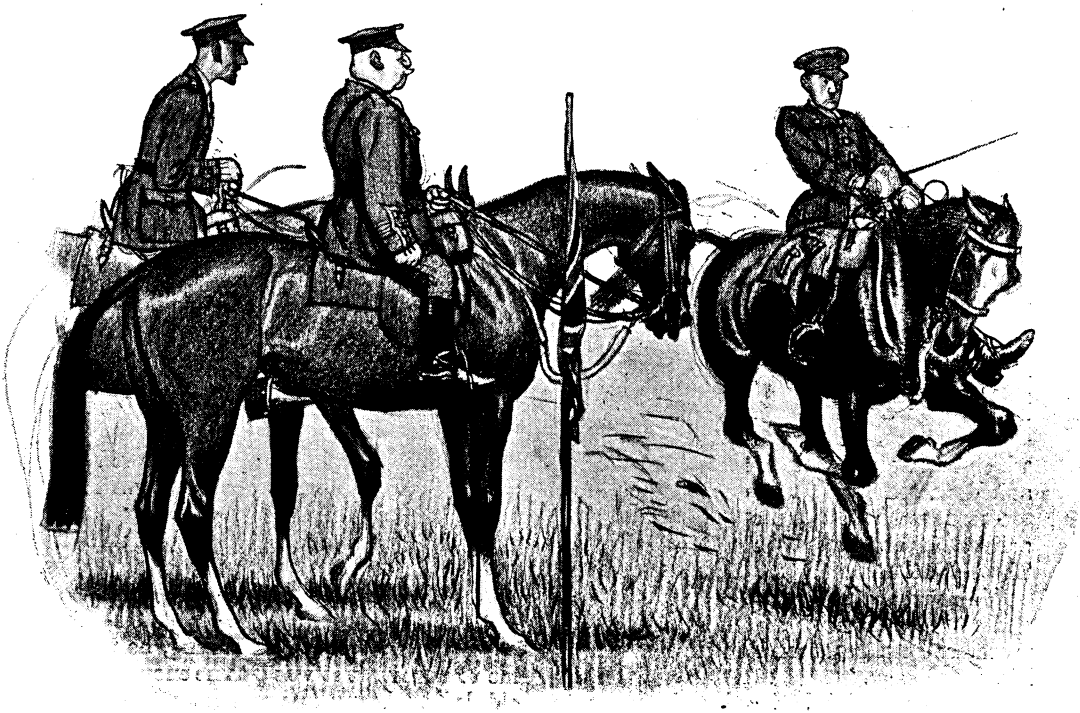
All passed smoothly and efficiently, with the precision and finish characteristic of the scientific Corps, until the mounted section began a left wheel at a fast trot. Chudleigh's mount, needing exercise, was full of life. His trot developed into a canter and, in spite of his rider's efforts to hold him, the canter into a gallop. Faster and faster he flew in a wide circle, now completely out of control. Chudleigh, his right hand encumbered with his sword and the left almost powerless, pulled with all his strength,

but made no impression on the bolting animal. In the meantime the section, their wheel completed, had come to a halt. All was wondering and motionless silence except for the thunder of the runaway's hoofs as he bore down upon the Colonel like a Derby winner. Tom saw the danger but could do nothing to avert it.

Sock-Eye sat motionless with only a slight blanching of his rubicund face, and his well-trained horse merely shivered as the runaway flashed past hardly three feet clear. In a vicious circle he continued his wild career, and finally slowed down after completing the circuit three times. Tom resumed his place and the exercises continued as if this deplorable incident had never occurred. Which says much for the training and gentlemanly instincts of the British Army.

Physically excited by the episode, Tom was even more disturbed in mind. This, surely, was the last straw to break the Colonel's back. Only a miracle could now save him.

The mounted section received the Major's command to advance. Tom, well out in front, was supposed to repeat the order. He half turned in his saddle. Extreme agitation was written on features which could be clearly distinguished by Sock-Eye and every man in the Company. With his mouth wide open and his Adam's-apple leaping up and down his throat, it seemed clear that for some reason he was warning the men to hold back. Then he charged forward alone at a full gallop. . . . Before he had gone fifty yards the ground ahead seemed to split open, a terrific explosion rent the air and a great black cloud of smoke, stones and earth rose high into the heavens. . . . Chudleigh was lost to sight in the midst of it. In a few seconds clods of clay and turf and showers of stones thumped and rattled to the ground.



"Sock-Eye sat motionless with only a slight blanching of his rubicund face, and his well-trained horse merely shivered as the runaway flashed past hardly three feet clear."

None of the Company was injured, but when the smoke was clearing away Chudleigh could be seen limping painfully back on foot out of the drifting cloud, blackened with grime, ragged and dishevelled.

"I hope Chudleigh's not hurt," said the Colonel anxiously to Major Cummings as the two officers rode rapidly towards the

approaching figure. "What was the reason for the mine being blown at this time? It's a very serious matter. If Chudleigh hadn't stopped the Company and then gone forward at the risk of his life to warn them not to fire the mine, a score of lives might have been lost."

"There's been some mistake," answered the O.C. "Tomlinson was in charge. The mine was due to be fired at 10.35, but it is not yet 10.30. Chudleigh, I suppose, was far enough ahead to see that they were preparing to fire it, and fortunately gave the warning to his section in time."

"What method was used?"

"Electric. The leads were carried to that copse a quarter of a mile away—over by the main road. There was a Corporal—Milne—in actual charge of the discharge box."

By this time they had come up to Chudleigh.

"Well, Mr. Chudleigh," asked the Colonel, "you're not hurt?"

"No, s-s-sir, n-n-not in body, but the nerves are a little f-frayed after an exciting morning."

"Well, you had better get back to the Mess and have a stiff whisky and soda. I'll see you again later in the day."

Chudleigh saluted, mounted his horse, which had been captured by one of the men, and departed for Barcester.

Tomlinson and Corporal Milne had now arrived on the scene, both pale and agitated. The Colonel looked stern. His eyes bulged.

"What was the cause of this outrageous affair?" he demanded. "It seems to me there has been gross carelessness somewhere, Mr. Tomlinson."

"Corporal Milne had orders from me to discharge the mine at 10.35, sir," replied Tomlinson. "That was the time arranged by the O.C. I was inside the shelter near the mine, to see the effect better, and of course he was in the copse where the leads had been carried, several hundred yards away. He tells me his watch, which he set by the noon gun yesterday, pointed exactly to 10.35 when he pressed the handle. But it had gained ten minutes in one day."

Sock-Eye turned to Spindle. "There will have to be a Regimental Court of Inquiry about this," he said. "Please arrange for it."

"Very good, sir."

That afternoon the Colonel sent for Tom Chudleigh.

"None the worse for your adventure this morning, my boy?" he asked. "Excellent. I want first of all to congratulate you on your narrow escape. It was a close shave. And I want to say that I think it was very gallant of you indeed to go forward to warn them not to fire the mine, without a thought of the danger——"

"B-B-But, sir——"

"No, let me have my say," interrupted the Colonel. "I shall certainly bear your action in mind and I intend to let the War Office——"

"B-B-But this is ab-s-surd——"

"That's all right, my lad. I appreciate your modesty and it does you credit."

"Well, have it your own way, s-s-sir. I s-suppose you know best."

"Yes, of course I do."

"By the way," he continued, "you ought to get rid of that horse of yours. If you had asked my advice you would never have got it in the first place. No officer of mine has ever before been mounted on such a ridiculous animal. You don't seem to know much about a horse, do you?"

"Not about the one I was r-r-riding today, at least. It w-w-wasn't m-m-mine, sir."

"Not yours! Whose was it, then?"

"Yours."

The Colonel blinked and swallowed convulsively. Luckily his cigarette was in his fingers at the time.

"Mine?" he said. "Explain yourself."

"The O.C. thought m-m-my quadru-p-ped was too lively for m-me to-day, on account of this h-h-hand, and as one of your s-s-steeds is stabled with us for exercising, he t-t-told me to take it, as it was t-tame enough for an old lady. I think he was exaggera-t-ting."

Sock-Eye stared at him, but said nothing. He swiftly changed the subject.

"Some time ago you told me you were fond of Joanna. Do you still want to marry her?"

"Yes, please." The answer was prompt.

"Well, Chudleigh, you know fathers of marriageable daughters are allowed to ask intimate questions. What private means have you, if any?"

"My Aunt allows me ten Bank of England notes a m-m-month—formerly called Bradburys, but since old B-B-Brad was buried——"

"A hundred and twenty a year," mused the Colonel. "Any expectations?" he asked.

"When the d-d-dear old l-l-lady shuffles



"Before he had gone fifty yards the ground ahead seemed to split open. A terrific explosion rent the air."

off I have reason to believe my m-m-modest income will be increased about f-five-fold."

"About six hundred a year. Not bad, not bad at all. Well, you have my permission, my boy. Good luck."

Tom, feeling in body and spirit as buoyant as a cork, floated out to the summer-house,

where Joanna eagerly awaited him. After the usual preliminaries the fair daughter of old Sock-Eye spoke.

"Oh, Tom, you dear old thing. Dad's frightfully pleased with you, and so am I. It was very decent of you to go forward as you did and try to stop them blowing up the mine when you might have been killed."

"Why, what else could an officer and a gentleman do?" He looked at her with a grin which broke into a laugh.

"Look here, Joanna, there'll b-b-be no false p-p-pretences between you and me at any rate."

"Why, what do you mean?"

"I t-t-tried to tell your father, b-b-but he wouldn't listen. But so far as he's concerned all's fair in love and war."

"Tell him what? Do get on, you laggard."

"Well, when Spindle gave the order to advance I tried to s-s-sing out the c-c-command, b-b-but not a word would come."

"But why did you go forward alone, then?"

"The horse got f-f-frightened at the gurgling in my throat and b-b-bolted for the second time."

They clung to each other in a fit of laughter.

"Tom, you're perfectly preposterous—priceless."

"Look out, old girl," he cried in alarm; "if you're not c-c-careful, firing out so many pup-pup-p's in quick succession, you'll be b-b-blowing out some of your front t-t-teeth. In the words of the l-litery gents, that's alliteration."

"What is alliteration?"

"In this case, a litter of pup-p's."

"A litter of puppies!"

"No. A litter of pup-p's."

"A litter of poppies?"

"No, no! A litter, a bunch of pup-p's—sweet pup-p's in your case."

"Oh, p's!"

"Yes, pup-p's."

"But tell me, Tom. How was it you were stammering again at the inspection?—you're doing it now. You were practically cured."

"So I was. When the horse f-f-first ran away with me this m-m-morning, and nearly barged into the Colonel as well, my n-n-nerves were somewhat upset, as you c-c-can imagine. But that was not the principal reason. In the treatment I am t-t-taking regularity is absolutely imperative to p-p-prevent a t-t-temporary relapse. This morning I spent all my spare time cutting and b-b-bandaging my hand and forgot to take my tut-tonic."

STRAY THOUGHTS.

Pedestrians should be seen, not hurt.

Some women would rather be cold themselves than have a man cold.

A moneylender is a man who takes a lot of interest in his job.

To her it's human—to him divine.

All that glitters is not sold.

More waist, less speed.

Men with Rolls-Royce ideas very often have only push-bike incomes.

As ye rip, so shall ye sew.

Among the great battles of the world, marriage and bargain sales take a high place.

Something invested, someone done.

A fool and his golf-story are soon started.

An office-boy's post is usually connected with stamps.

GEO. BEAUMONT.



"A good spin on a well boiled icicle."

OF SPOONERISM

By ANTHONY BERTRAM

ILLUSTRATED BY CHAS. GRAVE

THERE is more in Spoonerism than meets the eye. It is a matter of far-reaching significance, that delves profoundly into the innermost nature of man. Both its execution and its reception are symptomatic of things which are no joke. At least, I can see no reason why it shouldn't be all this. Philosophies have been built on feebler foundations.

Let us view the matter. Here you have a reverend doctor, Spooner by name, who has recently celebrated his golden wedding, a man of worth and distinction in the highest traditions of scholarship. One day Dr. Spooner, as any man may, makes a slip of the tongue, transposes the initial letters of two words. What the historic occasion was, what the exact transposition, I have never really learnt; but somehow that particular slip impressed his audience as exquisitely comic. It is passed round as a University joke. Deliberate comic trans-

positions are made and circulated and to give them verisimilitude they are fathered on Dr. Spooner. The joke spreads out of the University all over England. A tradition is established, as traditions so quickly are in jokes: it reaches the lexicographers, as jokes when they are worn out eventually do; and behold, Spoonerism takes its place



"'The First Boiler-Riveter's Aunt to Drain-Crawl to Wigan.'"

in the dictionary. Dr. Spooner is immortalised for a slip such as every man has made in his time. The merest chance selected him. Presumably the world was waiting for a new form of joke. Riddles, I take it, had run their day; limericks perhaps were languishing; puns were buried with dundrearies.

But what has all this to do with the innermost nature of man? How can this trivial narrative be of far-reaching significance?

Let me think a moment. Like so many philosophers, I have rather a vague idea of what I was saying. When I began I did feel it meant all this. . . . Oh yes,

What, I cry epigrammatically, is there to laugh at in a cart before a horse? Yet it is an old subject of mirth with man, this idea of transposition. There was a custom once to paint inn-signs showing men drawing carriages with horses inside them, men being chased by foxes, and the like. The sign was known as "The World Turned Upside Down." There is one to this day in the Old Kent Road as witness of what I say. But why is it funny?

I'm blessed if I know. I should hate to draw a carriage with a horse in it or to be chased by a fox; and of course I should hate even more to see one of my fellow-men in either predicament. It would hurt me more than it would hurt them. How painful it is for any of us to see our fellow-man in distress, sitting on his hat, or anything of that sort. But that is what I mean about the innermost nature of man. People *do* call Spoonerisms funny. That is something fundamental, inexplicable. Let us consider it sensibly.

I say to you, to use a classic example, that I am going to Brighton by the down train. You do not laugh. But I say, by mistake, that I am going by the town drain: and probably you do laugh. But you ought not to. If you recognise it as a slip, you ought to pretend not to notice anything, as I hope you would do if I made a grammatical slip; if you think I mean it, you should be sorry that a mind of such brilliance should have gone quite suddenly like that; or perhaps you should rejoice and be proud that man was about to conquer another element. You should glory to see stretching before you the heroic headlines "Record Drain-Crawl: Manhole Scenes." You should be impressed as you are when people swim the Channel. You should be ready to hail the "First Boiler-Riveter's Aunt to Drain-Crawl to Wigan," the "English Drain Triumphs," the leading articles beginning, "Who will call England decadent when her sons, etc."

But maybe you are not impressed when people swim the Channel. Maybe you guffaw and say, "How funny to see a man (or woman) behaving like a fish." But I

suspect that that is not your attitude, whence I draw another reflection on the innermost nature of man.

One transposition is funny, it seems, and not another. It is funny to see a man crawling on all fours down a drain and it is *not* funny to see a man crawling on all fours up a ladder. Why? Again, I'm blessed if I know.

Then there is another consideration. Why is a joke funnier when you father it on to a real person? I suppose it makes the picture more vivid if you know the person by sight—a hat joke would be nothing without Mr. Churchill—but where you don't, as for most of us with Dr. Spooner, why then?

You see what problems the matter raises. Philosophers—most notably, of course, Bergson—have discussed the problem of laughter very seriously. Their books are not funny. They make one wonder why one ever does laugh: there seems to be nothing left laughable in the world.

Nor is there, when you come to think of it. And so, since laughter is a very good thing, it is better not to think of it. But I suppose I am one of those thinking men to whom the hire-purchase advertisements appeal and I can't help wondering why a Spoonerism is funny.

Dr. Spooner is supposed—apocryphally, I have no doubt—to have rebuked an under-



"How funny to see a man (or woman) behaving like a fish."

graduate: "You have hissed my mystery lectures," he is supposed to have said; "you have tasted a whole worm."

Now you know really that isn't funny. First of all, if it had occurred it would have been most regrettable. The whole value of the doctor's remarks would have been lost on the feckless youth. They would have failed to be impressive, as John Philip Kemble failed when he broke off in *King Lear*, unable any longer to endure the squall-



"Their books are not funny."

ing of a baby in the gallery, and advancing to the footlights, exclaimed tragically, "If the play does not stop the baby cannot possible go on crying." That sort of thing's a pity, really.

And then, what was there funny about the Doctor's apparent meaning? Suppose the undergraduate *had* hissed his mystery lectures, wouldn't that have been most reprehensible? We cannot treat things like that with laughter. No good mystery lecture could possibly go on with a young man hissing all the time. Or again, if the young man really *had* tasted a whole worm . . . oh, the repulsive cruelty of it . . . not merely a dead bit of worm, but the whole living happy creature. What was the R.S.P.C.A. doing? It is terrible to contemplate such debasement of taste. Or would it show rather the tragedy of a lonely soul? Did the poor lad, finding that his hissing was unappreciated, that nobody loved him, go out into the quadrangle and eat worms? That is a sad, not a funny, picture.

No, no. We should not laugh at Spoonerisms. We should not laugh at anything.

And that, if you like, is a philosophic conclusion.

But all the same, when a man tells me that what he really enjoys is a good spin on a well boiled icycle . . . well, it's sad, but it's certainly funny. I mean to say, boiling an icycle is the very essence of futility . . . and then trying to spin on it. Well, poor chap. . . .

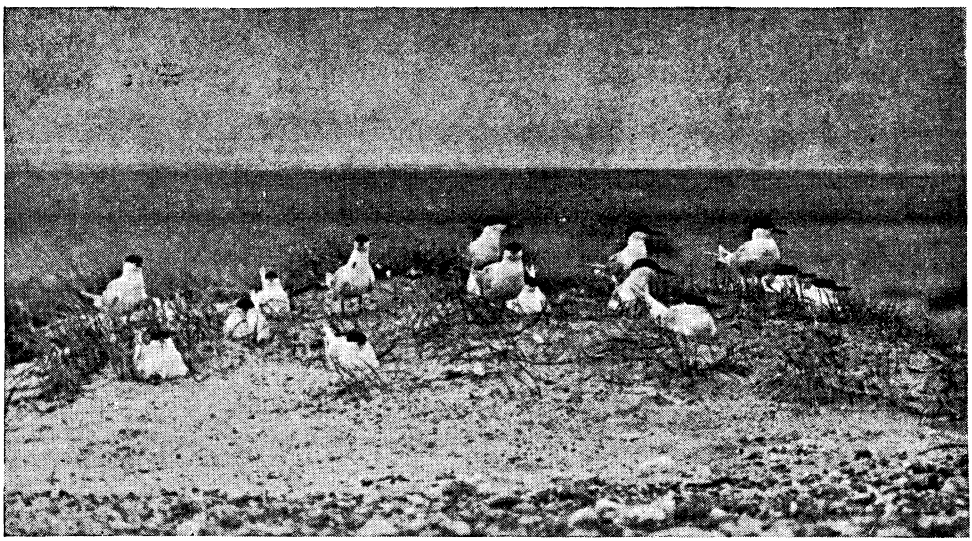
SPRING SONG.

GOOD morning, Good morning, green England in May,
Your meadows are verdant, your orchards are gay
With bridal-white blossoms that laugh as they swing,
And fluttering petals that whisper of Spring.

Your gardens with golden laburnums abound,
With revels of May Queen your valleys resound,
Your homesteads lie nestling 'neath sheltering hills,
Where May-time is mirrored in soft running rills.

Then welcome sweet Springtime—we've watched for you long.
We've waited to greet you—to feast you with song,
We'll dance and make merry—earth's winter is past,
And yields up its bleakness to Springtime at last.

ALICE GENT.



SANDWICH TERNS ON THEIR NESTS.

THE BIRDS OF BLAKENEY POINT

By S. L. BENSUSAN

Photographs by Reginald Gaze

IT may be that the Morston blacksmith, who runs the little motor-boat, ignores summer-time. "The water will be flowing in about five o'clock," he said, and lest the water should be unduly active we were there at a quarter to. But the tide that fills the fleets and provides a motor-boat road to Blakeney Point, where the sea-bird sanctuary straggles over miles of sand-dunes, had a quarrel with the wind. Perhaps it wasn't a quarrel, merely an argument, but the upshot was a wait of an hour and a half. The only redeeming features of a delay that threatened darkness and an over-cooked dinner belonged to a sailing boat and its athletic owner, a young girl who was mending a sail preparatory to a cruise on her own. Fleets, mud-banks, tides that are not punctual, winds that are variable, all these were as nothing to her; clearly she was the captain of her fate as well as of her craft.

So we watched her at her pleasant task, while the waters came slowly in as though they were in no hurry, and then, when the fleet was receiving the belated tide's attentions in earnest, we started out. The motor, though well stricken in years, responded nobly, and soon we were out of the fleet and on more open water, speeding towards the great sandy strip that stretches to Cley and provides a home for sea-birds past numbering, chiefly terns or ringed plover.

There were five species of terns in the dense crowd that rose screaming above our heads as we approached the nesting-ground, Common, Lesser, Sandwich, Roseate and Arctic, and, in addition to the plover, there were redshanks and oyster-catchers. As

we touched the landing-point, Mr. Pinchen, who has spent most of his life among sea-birds, awaited our arrival and gave us some timely warnings. They were more than necessary, they were urgent; for although the date was July 4, the nesting-ground was strewn with eggs and chicks. To walk carelessly would have meant the destruction of both, for the baby terns have something akin to protective colouring and lie very close when first hatched, while many of the eggs are just laid on the sand without so much as a depression to keep them in place.

Overhead the legions of the parent birds wheeled in angry flight; although visitors



THE BIRD WATCHER ON BLAKENEY POINT.

Mr. R. J. Pinchen holding two baby common terns.

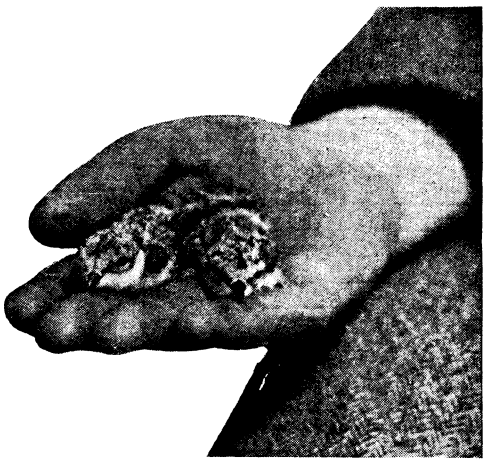
are numerous and harmless, the birds dislike disturbance, and not unnaturally. If they are kept too long from the eggs they may return to find them chilled; if they are not free to feed their young, some at least will die. So after half an hour spent among eggs and chicks it seemed right, as well as kind, to move off across the sand, and so soon as our little party of three was well away, we saw the great army of the terns sweep down on to the nests again, some of the birds sailing off to the water where they seek food for themselves and their young. This pool consists of small fish, apparently of the herring family—Mr. Pinchen calls them "whitebait"—sand eels, and small molluscs. The terns feed their babies by putting the fish into their mouths head first, and the young appear to absorb them slowly and steadily. If picked up while enjoying their meal they may make a sudden present of it to their captor, so it is well to restrain enthusiasms. A few years ago there were less than half a dozen pairs of Sandwich terns breeding on Blakeney Point; during the week-end that preceded our visit several hundred of the young of these birds had been "ringed" for purposes of identification. Redshanks, shelduck, oyster-catchers, and all or most of the ringed plover had completed their domestic engagements for the season, but the terns are very late in breeding, perhaps because they are such thoughtless birds. There are times when they lay their eggs so close to the water that the waves take all, and though Mr. Pinchen spoke of "bird tides" and appears to believe in them, the weather in these islands is not as reliable as it is in the Mediterranean, where the ancients knew the "halcyon days." Very often the terns are hatched out in cold weather, and while the first instinct of the new-born bird is to seek the lee side of a stone or the shelter of the marram grass, it may be born some distance from either. We saw many dead birds, but the breeding-grounds enjoy one special advantage, they are free from fourfooted vermin. Against weasels, rats and stoats the watcher wages unrelenting war, and he claims to have the ground clear. This is as it should be, for the young tern has more than sufficient enemies. Black-headed gulls, black-backed gulls, herring gulls and rare visitors like the Arctic Skua would work much mischief if they could; but in the first place the terns are of one mind in dealing with intruders, and then none of these marauding birds would be suffered to nest on the reserve. In all probability the predatory terns are the worst enemies of the colony's young.

Every community, whether winged or not, has a certain number of members who prefer to live without working. There are terns that dislike the drudgery of the fisherbird's life; they find it more pleasing to keep high in air until some relation is seen making for the nesting-ground with fish in beak; then they swoop down upon the worker and endeavour to carry off the spoil. If it can be done, the tern will get away; but should escape be impossible, it will swallow the fish and leave the thieves

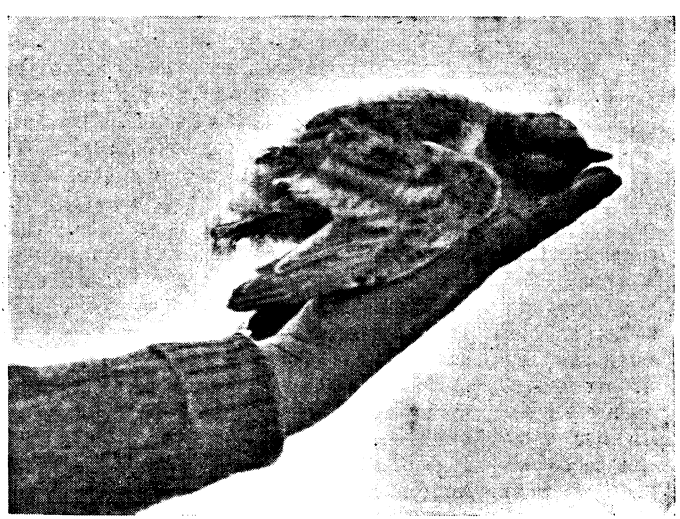
disconsolate. Unfortunately the babies on the ground in the hatchery are left disconsolate too, and they are not able to stay long without food. This would be a serious matter enough if the terns were less prolific, but it is clear that they can multiply their species very rapidly, given even a limited measure of security.

In spite of ill-chosen sites they apparently exercise some measure of birth-control, for, late in the season, many eggs are found with a hole in them. The contents have not been taken; perhaps the purpose of spoiling them is to avoid an increase that would carry the colony past subsistence point. Those of us who have kept bees know that the hive regulates the number of its colony in accordance with the season. It is right to add that other explanations have been forthcoming. Some think that the damage is due to gulls; but if they attacked the eggs it would hardly be to drill a hole in the shell and do nothing more, and it is well to remember that, at the first sign of interference from outside, the terns unite in their own defence. They seem to be a friendly community and will set up house together, but as a rule the lesser tern chooses the shingle for a nesting-ground, while others are content with sand.

A few years ago the fishing interests attacked the " Ternery " and sought authority to reduce the number of birds, on the ground that they destroyed a great bulk of valuable flat fish. The challenge was taken up and the watcher, an experienced shot, was deputed to kill a certain number of birds to find out what they had eaten. He shot sparingly, but came near to emptying the reserve, as the birds took fright, and flight. Skilled examination placed their character above suspicion and vindicated Mr. Pinchen, who had laughed the charge to scorn, declaring first that the tern had no use for flat-fish and could not swallow them; secondly, that the small-meshed nets in vogue are the real enemies of the diminutive flat-fish, while a great colony of seals, fifty or sixty in number, on the far side of the point, are the masters of the mature ones. That seal colony must be well established; the writer saw one or two of its representatives in the vicinity nearly twenty years ago.



YOUNG RINGED PLOVER.



YOUNG COMMON TERN.

The shelduck that build on Blakeney Point choose rabbit-holes for their nests and are said to go so far as to dispossess the lawful tenants. The Sandwich Terns sometimes arrange a little grass round their clutch; the Common and Lesser Terns lay eggs on the ground without care; but the ringed plover and the oyster-catcher show a certain taste for decoration and surround with cockle-shells the depression that serves for a nest. It is a great country for cockles; on the far-flung marshlands between Wells and Blakeney Point scores of women earn a living

following the retreating tides and collecting these alleged dainties. They bring heavy loads to the land beyond reach of tide, and there the middlemen collect them. Perhaps the oyster-catchers eat the cockle before they dispose of the shell for purposes of decoration.

There were vast companies of young ringed plover on the reserve; those that were grown, if not fully fledged, ran before us in flocks. One young bird newly born attracted our attention, and the mother

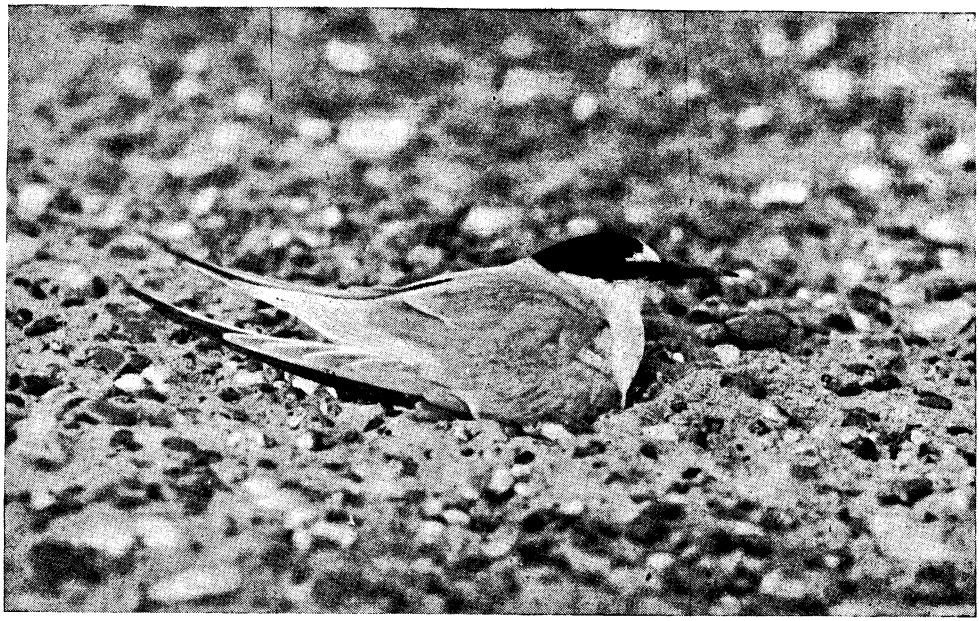


COMMON TERN'S NEST AND EGGS IN THE SAND.

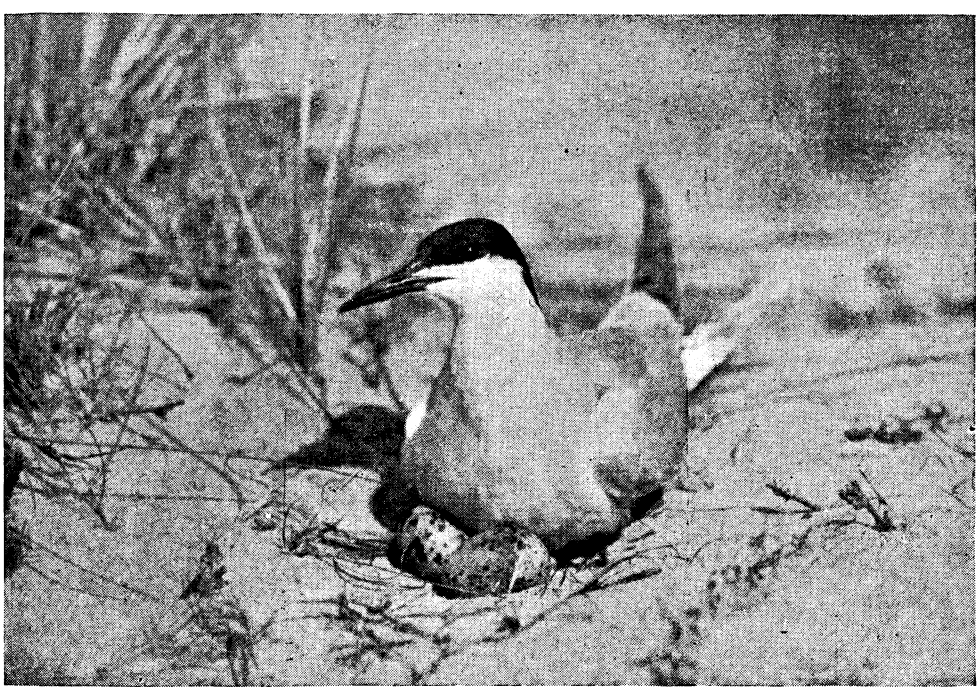
who was watching near by became very excited. On a sudden she ran round a piece of marram grass and came right in front of us, about ten yards away. She seemed to drag herself along the ground; with tail down and wings fluttering, she slipped now and again as though she had been badly wounded, and all her movements were designed to draw us away from the little depression in which her baby squatted. It was only considerate to aid the pretence, so we followed until we were well away from the baby bird, and then the mother, feeling doubtless that deception had gone far enough, recovered her health, strength and use of wings all at once and flew away. I have seen partridges perform this trick time and again, and on one or two occasions I have known a hen pheasant do the same. Other birds, like the green plover, will pretend to swoop down on you if you approach their young too closely, but this was the first occasion on which I had seen ringed plover sham trouble. I am told that sometimes both parents will seek to draw folk away in this fashion.

Later in the afternoon I surprised another little ringed plover and frightened it. The water was near at hand, and the young bird sought the waves at once. I had not seen the mother-bird, but she must have been watching, for she too took to the water, not to keep her baby company, but to drive it back on to the land.

It has long been an article of faith with me that by shooting birds and robbing them of their nests or eggs we deprive ourselves of much friendship. Many times in the past thirty years I have proved this, taming quite successfully and entirely by patient kindness such difficult birds as marabout storks, ravens and owls, to say nothing of the shyest finches. The watcher told me the story of an oyster-catcher that has nested on the reserve for twenty-nine years. Once he came running before the watcher, keeping so close and uttering such a strange cry, that Mr. Pinchen, convinced all was not well, followed to the edge of the water. There he saw the cause of the trouble. The tide had been unusually high and had washed the six eggs out of their hole. Mr. Pinchen restored them and the two ladies in charge resumed their office. One does not like to say anything that savours of scandal, but truth compels the statement that while Mr. Oyster-Catcher was content with one wife in the years of his youth, he has for many seasons past taken two. They are quite friendly one with the other, and so far as can be seen, they are devoted to him; so all goes well. He was out on the edge of the water when we were there, but we did not see his ladies. Perhaps they were looking after their children; perhaps he was feeling a little tired of domesticity.



LITTLE TERN (DISTINGUISHED BY HER WHITE FOREHEAD) ON HER NEST IN THE SHINGLE.



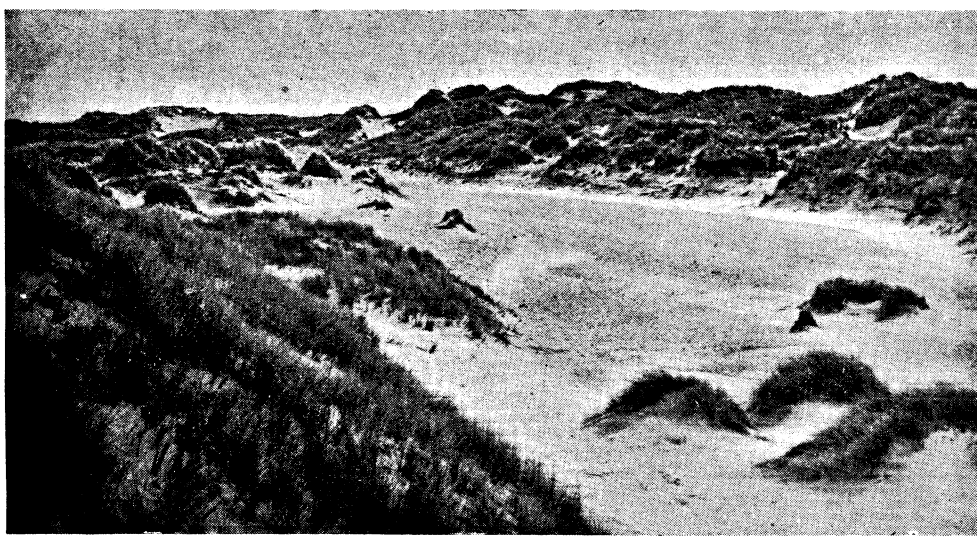
COMMON TERN COMING ON TO HER NEST.

When the wives are sitting on the eggs he supplies them with food, and in all respects, save one, may be regarded as a model husband.

Although the breeding-ground is used almost entirely by sea-birds, the high banks with their marram and light-land grasses and their scanty growth of bush attract other birds. Meadow-pipits, linnets, wagtails and larks are numerous; it was clear that the place attracts the skylark. Migrant sea-birds sometimes stay to rest—curlew, dunlin, redshanks, grey plover, shearwaters, kittiwakes, gannets. They may find repose in security, for to-day the spirit of the times is moving against the collector. Mr. Pinchen can tell of years when some of the rarest birds known to ornithologists were shot, where now they would be required to face nothing more murderous than a camera. Such were the icterine warbler, the red-breasted fly-catcher and



THE BEAUTIFUL EGGS OF THE SANDWICH TERN LAID ON THE BARE SAND.



GENERAL VIEW OF THE SAND-DUNES AT BLAKENEY.



OYSTER-CATCHER'S NEST AND EGGS.

the barred willow-warbler. They had a great market value and their destruction was assured. To-day we realise the limitations that nature imposes and do not seek to add to them, so that if the very scarce birds are not entirely shot out, they may recover their numbers. It would be well if the possession of rare skins and eggs could be limited to a certain number of museums, and all other possession be a penal offence. We have only started our serious work when we restore the numbers of our rarer birds; following that we may hope to study their habits and ways of life and find what advantage they derive from living in colonies. It is clear already that the terns are able by sheer weight of numbers to resist the incursion of bigger birds that would destroy their eggs and young. They have gathered so much confidence that they are even known to dart at visitors.

They have their moods too. Sometimes in the nesting season they will all rise into the air and sweep away out of sight of their breeding-ground, away from all their cares and responsibilities. Then, after a brief excursion into a care-free world, they will return together as suddenly as they went, and resume duty. Compare this with the swarming-hour of the beehive, the brief space in which the foragers forget that they are doomed to work from birth to death for no better purpose than the maintenance of the hive. This flight of the terns, together with the destruction of superfluous eggs, appears to me to point to some law of life operative in the insect and bird world; it suggests some underlying unity of purpose that leads Nature to inform great colonies with an intelligence suited to their needs.

But while we have seen and pondered, the long summer afternoon has yielded to the advances of evening, the water is at the full, and within half an hour of it our blacksmith may be seen urging his motor-boat across the still and placid sea that is not alone in its stillness. A great quiet has fallen upon the colony. Thousands of birds are now brooding their eggs or young, happy in the knowledge that the night will bring no disturbance. So we leave the Ternery asleep, or on the verge of sleep, and make our way over waters which have been touched to a vivid life by the luminous finger of sunset.

We are back at Morston before the light has gone, and soon the car is moving swiftly over a white ribbon of road, bare as the great spaces we have left behind, but full of the rich scents of summer, scents of rose in hedgerow, and of white clover, the aftermath of fields swept clear of their first harvest.

FURNISHING THE HOUSE.

HERE'S the little house for you and me,
Let us furnish it together,
That adequate and beautiful it be,
And made secure from all life's changing weather.

'Neath the sloping roof of it
May Peace in her beauty sit.

In each quiet cosy room
Sweet Contentment ever bloom.

In the busy kitchen place
May Good Temper give it grace.

In the bedrooms one by one,
Rest be waiting when day's done;

And life's richest guerdon yet,
Sleep that comes without regret.

Hiding somewhere on the stairs
Laughter lurk there unawares,

And from dawn till fall of night
May Love keep each fire alight.

DOROTHY DICKINSON.

THE PROBLEM OF WORLD OVER-POPULATION

COULD IT BE SOLVED BY INTERNATIONAL AGREEMENT?

By the RIGHT HON. PHILIP SNOWDEN, M.P.

A thought-provoking article on one of the most momentous questions of the day by the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the Labour Government, 1924. The "Windsor" is a non-political magazine and must not be assumed either to agree or to disagree with the views expressed.

THE world is not over-populated. The Malthusian doctrine that the population of the world is increasing more rapidly than human capacity to feed and clothe the race is discredited by actual facts.

The world could never be over-populated unless the resources of Nature when fully exploited by scientific knowledge and human labour were inadequate to provide all the people with a reasonable standard of life.

That is certainly not the case to-day. Tens of millions of acres of land, capable of producing vast stores of food, are still undeveloped. It is calculated that the untilled lands of Canada and Siberia alone would be able to supply the whole wheat requirements of the present world population, not taking into account the possibilities of greater scientific production than is employed at present.

The resources of the tropical countries are still largely undeveloped. Beyond these facts lies the certainty of new chemical processes which will produce in unlimited quantities by synthetic methods commodities which we now have to obtain from natural products.

Since the beginning of the industrial revolution the power to produce wealth has advanced more rapidly than the increase of the world population. That is likely to continue, and so long as it does there can be no problem of world over-population in the aggregate.

But there is a problem of geographical congestion of population. In a relative sense some countries are over-populated and others are sparsely populated. The under-population of countries which have great natural resources, which are lying undeveloped for the lack of population, is a great loss to the wealth of the world, and is at the same time an aggravation of the economic difficulties of the more densely populated countries.

There is no more important question demanding international co-operation and organisation than that of spreading the population more evenly over the face of the earth.

The pressure of population in the past has been a frequent cause of wars. Unless that matter can be settled by international agreement, it is likely to lead to wars in the future. Three of the European nations have already appropriated, by conquest or colonisation, over one-fourth of the surface of the earth.

If these countries maintain a policy of excluding other nations from settlement in their territories, serious trouble is bound to arise. The British policy of maintaining the "open door" for the commerce of other countries in its Colonies and Dependencies has so far mitigated the sense of injustice which might have been felt if a policy of rigid exclusiveness had been adopted.

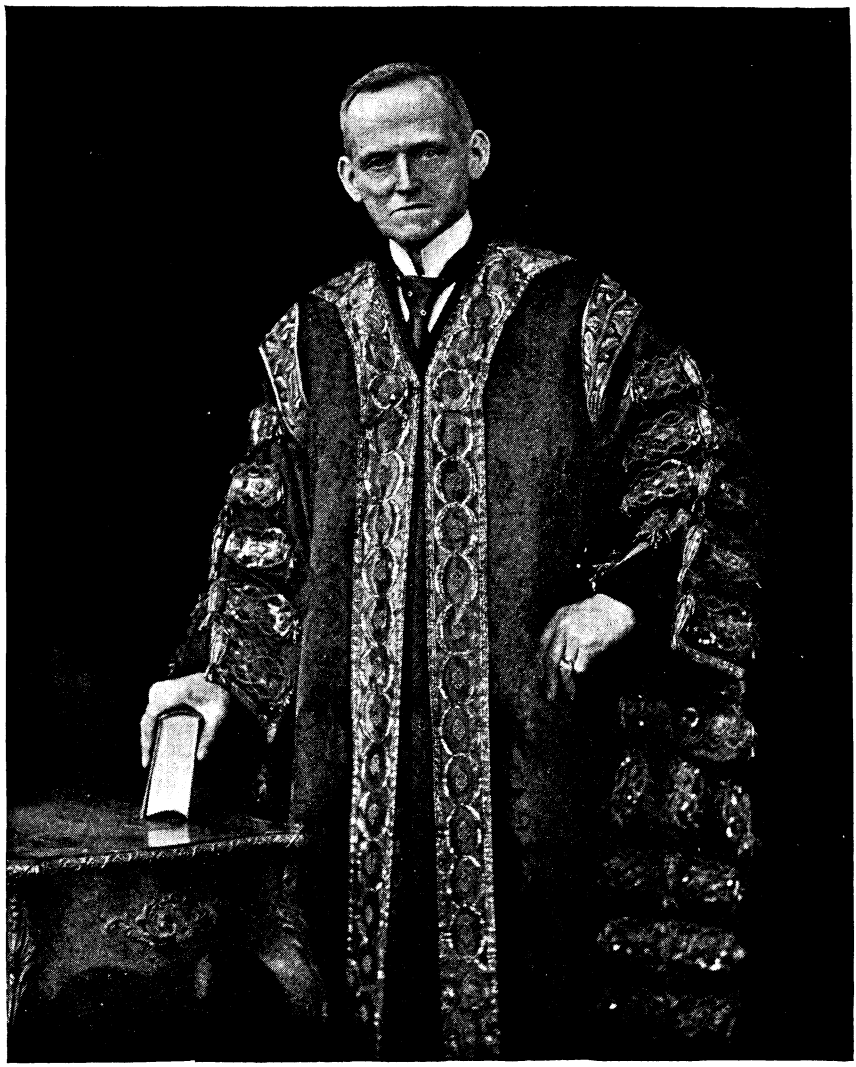
But the problem is not merely one of

trade facilities. It is also one of settlement for the nationals of other countries, where there is a congested population which needs an outlet. And further, when countries like Australia, Canada, and the United States adopt a policy of excluding or limiting immigration, while they have vast uninhabited lands capable of adding enormously to the wealth of the world, international jealousy is bound to be created.

The problem is really one of nationalism versus internationalism. It will only be solved by recognising that the whole earth is the common heritage of the whole population of the world, and that its resources should be regarded as a common heritage, available for every race and nation.

Racial antipathy stands in the way of spreading the world's population. The three great countries of Australia, Canada, and the United States have erected notices forbidding the yellow man to enter their territories.

Japan, with its congested population, looks across the narrow sea which divides it from the American continent and reads these prohibitions. Australia has definitely adopted a " White Australia " policy.



[*Russell, London.*

THE RIGHT HON. PHILIP SNOWDEN, M.P.

The United States for some years now has abandoned its former immigration policy of free admission, and strictly rations the entrance of immigrants. The Report of the United States Immigration Department which has recently been published points not to a relaxation but to a stiffening of the immigration restrictions.

The immigration quotas are probably designed to secure two objects; namely, the restriction of the number of immigrants, and to maintain a definite proportion of settlers of different nationalities.

The restriction of immigration into Australia, Canada, and the United States is mainly dictated by the idea of maintaining labour standards. It is a form of protection. Labour fears two things from unrestricted immigration. It objects to the entry of large numbers of settlers from the European countries, with a fairly high standard of living, from the fear that a surplus of labour will increase competition for employment and tend to lower wages. And it strongly objects to the entry of the yellow races because of the low standard of living to which these people are accustomed.

The League of Nations has given considerable attention to this problem of immigration, but the nationalism of the countries which might find a home for the surplus population of other countries has stood in the way of any practical steps being adopted.

There appears to be only one solution, and in the present temper of the countries which might absorb immigrants this seems unlikely to be adopted just yet. That plan would be some international arrangement on the quota system by which the crowded countries might send regularly an agreed quota of immigrants to the underpopulated countries.

This would involve the abandonment of the exclusion of immigrants on account of race and colour. The British Dominions, and particularly Australia, which are so determined to maintain the British character of their countries, would be difficult to convince of the international need for such a policy. One can understand their point of view, and the sentiment which partly actuates their opposition; but wider consideration must eventually override these views if serious international complications are to be avoided. Nothing could be more disastrous for the British Empire than the conviction in countries like Japan, Italy and Germany that the British Empire was adopting a dog-in-the-manger attitude.

There is also the practical difficulty of a new country rapidly absorbing a flood of immigrants. We have experienced that in our efforts to stimulate the transfer of people from Great Britain to the British Dominions. But it should at least be possible to have a quota system which would avoid that difficulty. But whatever the practical difficulties may be, the problem of the international regulation of immigration is bound to become increasingly acute.

THE PERFECT HOST.

HE greeted me with radiant smile
And made me feel it was worth while
To run the risks of road and rail
To meet so affable a male.
At breakfast he was never glum,
Nor made me wish I hadn't come.
Even when hurried he would see
That I had got my toast and tea.
He often took me for a drive,
And always brought me back alive.
At bridge he paid me many a crown
And what is more, he paid them down!
He never took the best armchair,
Nor went to sleep when I was there,
And when we parted at the station,
He did not show undue elation!

A. K. S.



A MARRIAGE MARKET NEAR SIMLA.
Brides-to-be in gala dress sitting on the terrace of a hillside to attract husbands.

THE REVOLT OF THE VEILED WOMEN

By SIRDAR IKBAL ALI SHAH

Author of "Afghanistan of the Afghans," "Westward to Mecca," etc.

The troubles in Afghanistan have further focussed attention upon the great movement that is taking place all over the East in favour of the emancipation of women. The writer, as a member of an important family of Afghan nobles, has made a special study of the question and is able to speak from experience of his own people.

AFTER a recent journey of over 40,000 miles in Asia, I have no hesitation in saying that, judging by old standards, my veiled sisters of Islam are in revolt against practically everything which savours of the past. The ideas of our women are progressing so rapidly that if men of a generation ago were to arise, they would not claim the modern Eastern girls as their own. The Western impact is, of course, responsible for much of this change. Go where you like, in Turkey, Persia, Turkestan, India, even in my own conservative country of Afghanistan, you will be struck by the wave of modernisation which is sweeping over the feminist East. Within limits I welcome this change; for without it we should lapse into those dark ages from which we are happily emerging.

One must admit that the present-day agitation among our women is a reaction against the pitiless social thraldom under which Eastern women groaned so long. Seclusion, or what is called *Purdah*, was imposed to such a degree as to divorce the life of woman from the work of man. Her education was neglected in a large measure, and she was classed definitely as infra-human. And, although her legal rights were fully protected, there was never a question, for quite two centuries, of her lending a helping hand in the larger issues of life. I speak of the majority, not of that refined strata of Eastern society in which

Asian culture always remained a guiding-point, and women "ruled" the men more truly than is generally known.

The War and other conditions, both political and economic, have increased the dissemination of ideas; the press, wireless, and a hundred other devices that have "contracted the world," bringing about an awakening in the East unthought of during the time of my forefathers. But this renascence of Asian womanhood has touched only the fringe. Wherever it has gone it has none the less penetrated deeply. Other odd corners are still dark, but they are bound to feel the effects.



AN AFGHAN LADY IN INDOOR DRESS.

She is of the old school. This style of dress is changing.

In certain Arab countries, for instance, a woman dare not show her face in the street. At Jaffa, when a few women, bent upon modernisation, discarded their veils, there was a riot in the place till the women were escorted back to their homes by the police. In Persia, too, all must cover their faces and wear long black flowing robes, nearly reaching down to their ankles. When in the home, of course, I question whether their frocks are less fashionable than those worn in London, New York or Paris. You need only to walk through the Poppy Street in Teheran, the capital of Persia, to be convinced of the hold that fine clothes and cosmetics have upon the feminine mind. Every fourth shop caters for the ladies, and in the evening there is hardly standing-room in the *Moghazas*, as the drapery stores are called.

But Turkey is unquestionably leading the way in this regard. Constantinople is becoming the Paris of Asia. The women there began the modern era of liberty with the dropping of the yashmak. No longer would you see them in that brightly coloured Feriji, or cloak, which for generations hung over them with the traditional thraldom of the clergy in the Moslem East. They have taken to the coat-and-skirt mode of dress, but do not so far believe in spending ten guineas on a hat. A sort of lightly coloured veil is generally tied on the head, and long tresses are rare. I found that the traditions of powder and rouge application and many other devices of beautification are faithfully observed by the women of Turkey to-day. In addition, heavy darkening of the eyelids generally indicates the Turkish women in the streets. They wear such high-heeled shoes that I remember seeing two of them fall on the cobbled streets in front of the Sublime Porte in an endeavour to avoid being run over by a bullock cart. And much indeed did I wonder whether the Grand Vizier who once threatened even the Chancellories of Imperial Russia did not turn in his grave to see two Turkish maidens wearing such high-heeled shoes passing the threshold of Bab Alli, where the Ambassadors of Kings stood in awe, shuddering to approach the white-bearded and wizened denizen of the august Porte of the mighty Sultans.

Not far from the old Palace grounds you would see a public park, and be surprised to notice that a gazelle-eyed Turkish maiden, wearing an extremely short skirt, sits under a large umbrella and offers to weigh four people in a weighing machine

for a charge of a penny. Farther on you would see young things twittering like pretty birds to each other when taking the air, and standing awed in admiration, looking at the bronzed statue of Ghazi Mustafa Kemal Pasha. In a sunlit corner of the Sycamore Avenue a young wife may be helping her husband to take a photograph of their son. All is laughter and song, differing little from the West End crowd in Hyde Park on a Sunday afternoon.

But when you get to the interior you are in another world. Even in Angora—the new capital—life differs materially. Here is the real home of the Turk, for despite the success that has attended the efforts of the new regime, and the Paris frocks to be seen in the Grand Avenue at the foot of the hill on which Angora is built, the older parts of the town provide a great contrast. The veil may not in some cases be there, but not a single woman will you see without a cloak of sombre black.

As the Turkish women are inclined to be stout, they may not be so nimble-footed, but their gait is so dignified that you hardly notice them till you turn round. Here one sees the purest type, with almond-shaped eyes, placid in expression, with somewhat high cheek-bones, and a light in the face that one hardly ever sees even among the prettiest ladies of Damascus.

In conversation with strangers, no gaze is directed at the person who is speaking. They sit with downcast eyes till a humorous remark lights up their faces. The smile unfortunately plays in their eyes but briefly, like sunset in the distant hills of Stamboul. I found the younger women in Turkey in intelligence infinitely superior to their menfolk. Their grasp of ideas is prodigious, and they are simple. Like children, they know no half-measures—they love or hate. "We were a great nation," said a Turkish girl of twenty in fluent Persian to me; "we are going to be greater." That remark gave me a glimpse of the great fire of nationalism that blazes in the minds of everyone in Turkey now.

"Why should we be sat upon by any nation?" added her girl cousin—she was a teacher in a girls' school in an Anatolian town; "the Greeks, the English, the Germans and all others have been friends and enemies; but we must stand on our own



INDIAN WOMEN IN INDOOR DRESS.

Notice their jewellery, the hubble-bubble and the shopping basket.

legs." She was very definite; and I wondered whether she was not quoting a passage from one of the speeches that a well-known Turkish nationalist recently made in Smyrna.

I let such remarks simmer in my mind before arriving at any conclusion, as these ladies belonged to the old families, and, believing that aristocracies approximate everywhere, it was wiser to discover the true tendency lower down in society. This came to me somewhat crudely in the office of a travel agency away down in the south of Anatolia. "You are not businesslike,"

remarked a young lady of Turkish blood over the counter of her office because I had questioned the advisability of a long journey by railway to Syria. "The world has changed," she reminded me. "You must excuse me for suggesting your travel route to you. I wish to be of help. We in Turkey are educated to shoulder our share of the burden. Men have plenty to carry." She had qualified at the Girls' High School in her town, she told me, and had marched with banners in a procession in honour of the liberation of womanhood in Turkey a few weeks ago. And her father—an old reformers rather forcing the pace. In Persia, too, the feminist movement is very strong, so powerful indeed that they have now succeeded in providing for the education of women on an organised basis at Teheran.

Indian women are not lagging behind, for, quite apart from the standard of revolt that the Behar women raised, the Begum of Bhopal by her addresses at the Women's Conference has already thrown down a challenge by saying that seclusion was detrimental to their national regeneration, and in the form that it was practised inconsistent with the theology of Islam. Child



TURKISH SCHOOLGIRLS MARCHING THROUGH AN ANATOLIAN TOWN TO CELEBRATE THEIR FREEDOM.

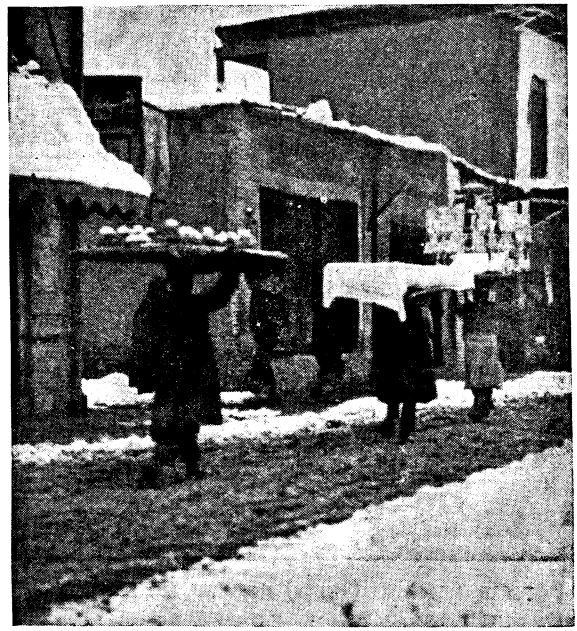
gentleman of the true Uzbek race—sat smoking his narghile and sipping his coffee under a mulberry tree. "I am Moslem," he said, waving me away with his hand as I levelled my camera at him; "none shall take my photograph." Thus the old jostles the new, but leaves no sting in the process.

And despite the opposition which Queen Souriya met in Afghanistan, there is no mistaking the fact that an awakening has dawned upon the women at Kabul which would not have been tolerated even as recently as a decade ago. The disturbed conditions there are due to the fact of the marriage is now frowned upon by most enlightened Indians. To combat the evil of early marriage, an Indian gentleman pointed out to me a custom which still prevails in parts of the Indian Hills where the social difficulties of the Plains have never penetrated. That was, of course, no other than the "marriage market" which takes place annually near Simla, the summer capital of India. It is one of the most picturesque gatherings that I, as a student of humanity, have witnessed. To the social scientist its value is great indeed, and a description is pertinent here.

From early morning on a bright summer's day you see thousands of hill-folk, bedecked in clothes of bright hues, winding their way to the valley below. Sallow-complexioned youths of Mongolian features, in tight-fitting white trousers, blue waistcoats and yellow turbans, take to the road in gay moods, singing, clapping hands, and playing their flutes. Hordes of women, perilously seated on hill ponies, endeavouring to tuck their scarlet sheets under the saddle, adjusting their bracelets or nose-rings, spur on their mounts with their toecaps made of silver.

Those who walk complete their toilet at the wayside brook by washing their henna-coloured hands. Then come the middle-aged, even the old, men and women. They are the relatives of the young people, and do the bargaining at the gala fair of the marriage market.

This procession pours into the hollow of the hills from all directions until the eligible girls have crowded the seats that are cut in the hillside like the tiers of a Roman theatre. Their parents sit close to the barricade of the brides-to-be, eyeing every passer-by who appears to be interested in the girls. Not till the gay Lotharios, laughing, eating sweets and the betel-leaf, have done six rounds of the girls' stand, is business trans-

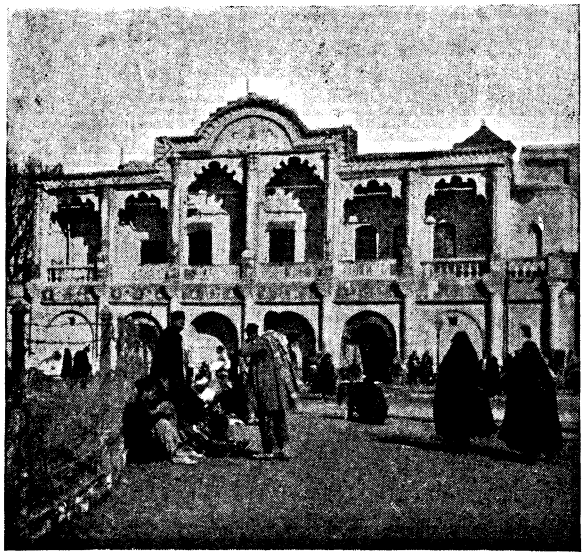


BRIDAL PRESENTS.

Gifts being taken to the house of a newly-wed couple in Teheran.



AFGHAN GIRLS WHO WERE SENT TO TURKEY TO BE EDUCATED.



PERSIAN WOMEN (RIGHT) IN A PUBLIC SQUARE.
They are veiled, but free in every other respect.

their reflections in the "holy oil" in order to be happy in their married life. In the gloaming you will see hundreds of couples picking their way to their respective villages on the goat tracks along the valley and swallowed up by the phantom light of the silvery moon over the hills beyond.

Yes, the whole belt of humanity from Morocco to Siam is bestirred; the other half of womankind is coming in to her own, marking the dawn of a new age in the history of Asia.

The popular saying that "man is fire and woman is tow" no longer fits the present-day life of the East. When Amanullah decreed that his Queen should publicly unveil, half Afghanistan was horrified. But which half? The male half, of course. It felt instinctively that woman was the stronger force, had already far too much power, without setting her loose upon the world. After all, are we not to achieve the conquest of that earth of which woman is the most powerful manifestation, the supreme and almost impregnable symbol?

acted. By this time assent has been secured by exchanging and re-exchanging glances.

A little past noon the male relatives of the girls approach the attracted men. Under the deodars you will see clumps of men and women, composed of relatives of the interested couples, driving the marriage bargain. Generally speaking, the difficulty of the price payable to the bride's parent is got over by some gift in kind, say a cow or a pair of ploughs. The official ceremony takes place at the shrine near by, but the girl's people must buy the sweets for the offering to be made to the priest on that occasion. Bells are tinkled, red paint is smeared on the Hindu idol, a few prayers are muttered, a corner of the woman's garment is tied to the skirt of the man's coat, and the marriage is over.

Hand in hand, the newly wedded do the round of the many booths of the fair, buying sweets or trinkets, or an earthenware pot for the hubble-bubble, or they sit in the merry-go-rounds for an hour, the whole proceeding costing them less than sixpence.

Before leaving the fair they must go to the priest and see



UNVEILED WOMEN OF MODERN TURKEY, IN AN OLD STREET OF CONSTANTINOPLE.

THE GATE OF ADVENTURE

By EDMUND SNELL

ILLUSTRATED BY WILMOT LUNT

CHRISTINE MADDISON, at twenty-four, had fixed opinions on almost every subject under the sun—and, as is pretty usual with opinions fixed at twenty-four, most of them were wrong.

She did not believe, for example, that people ever really fell in love. She could not imagine a situation out of which a woman could not wriggle very nicely by herself; and she could not for the life of her understand why a girl with more than her share of good looks should not travel from one end of the Continent to the other without the assistance of an older or more experienced companion.

Consequently, when an unexpected stroke of good fortune placed her in possession of a hundred pounds, she decided to go to Mallorca alone.

She announced her resolution quite casually at breakfast, and was secretly disappointed at the lack of interest shown by the members of her family. She had expected to create a profound sensation, second only in intensity to that which had greeted the defiant doffing of her hat in that same room on the evening she had returned from the city shingled! But the Maddison household, as inured to her bombshells as an experienced battalion to *crumps*, masticated its bacon placidly and refused point-blank to be drawn into argument.

George Maddison, senior, lowered his paper presently and peered over the top of it, prepared to take cover at the first sign of sniping.

"Oh?" he queried. "Why Mallorca?"

"I don't know," said Christine. "It's a topping place. The Mackenzies simply rave about it—I shall stop one night in Paris."

George Maddison, junior, compared his watch with the marble clock on the mantelpiece and decided he would have to bolt for it.

"Mind you don't get run over," he advised from the door. "The traffic's awful."

He reappeared a few seconds later with his hat and gloves, kissed Mrs. Maddison's forehead, examined the small change in his ticket-pocket and made his final exit by way of the front door.

Christine had never cared very much for George. He had an irritating way of wilfully misunderstanding her. Street-crossing was not one of the dangers of which she had been thinking when she had spoken of stopping in Paris.

Mrs. Maddison, meek, even-tempered and dyspeptic, left her redoubt behind the tea-cosy and embarked upon a mild sortie.

"And what are you going to do when you get there?" she asked.

Christine thrust a virginia cigarette into a stained ivory holder of prodigious length and ignited it before replying.

"Float around and see places, I suppose. The Mackenzies said there were some mountains and caves and all that sort of thing. It'll be nice to exchange this ghastly weather for a little real sunshine."

She crossed to the window and surveyed some lime trees and a privet-hedge bathed in a chill, persistent drizzle.

Her father, clean-shaven, red-faced, and rotund, passed the paper in the direction of the tea-cosy and brushed some crumbs from his waistcoat.

"If you had the slightest grain of decency in you," he growled, "you'd take your mother."

"I dare say," came the prompt response. "Why don't *you*?"

George Dennison patted his wife's hand in passing.

"Perhaps I will one of these days, when we haven't you two to feed and your friends to entertain," he returned. "When do you propose starting?"

"To-morrow," said Christine. "I'm taking the nine o'clock from Victoria."

"Folkestone—Boulogne," murmured her father. "Hope you have a nice crossing. We shall be seeing you to-night, I suppose?"

"Oh yes. I shan't be going out. I shall have my packing to do."

"Christine!" said Mrs. Maddison reproachfully, as soon as the door had closed, "why didn't you tell us before?"

The girl wrinkled her forehead prettily and spread out her hands.

"How could I, Mums dear? I didn't know myself until just before I came down. I've been stewing up guides and Continental time-tables for weeks, trying to make up my mind. You're not really frightfully peeved with me, are you?"

Mrs. Maddison rang the bell for the maid.

"I don't know," she returned. "Your father's furious. I know by the way he slammed the front door."

"Oh! *Him!*" said Christine disrespectfully. "He did that when I bought a motor-bike!"

According to Christine's creed, fathers were universal providers with whom one ran a sort of perpetual credit account. One did not go out of one's way to thank them for benefits conferred, but rather hastened to nip in the bud any attempts at assertion of authority based on supposed indebtedness.

"Your father," pursued Mrs. Maddison, "thinks you should have put that hundred pounds in the bank."

Christine laughed.

"Mums!" she declared, "I'm going to have the time of my life for as long as the money lasts. I'm going to blue every cent of it—and then I'm coming back to settle down——"

"And marry, I hope."

Christine shook her head slowly to and fro, sprinkling cigarette-ash on the carpet.

"Nothing doing, darling! I'm going to get a job and settle down in rooms—and leave the babies to those who like them!"

She fled for the door, giving her mother a violent hug on the way, and surprising the little maid so completely that she carried her with her as far as the hall-stand.

Up in her own room on the second floor, with its green wall-paper and spotless white paint, she sat on the bed and regarded with some satisfaction a little group of photographs in silver and wooden frames standing on an odd table in a corner. This miniature portrait-gallery comprised a man in flying kit, a naval officer wearing his most superior smile, an amateur print of a fellow in tennis flannels that had become discoloured in the sun, and sundry other immature young men arranged more or less in accordance with their individual prowess as dancing partners.

Christine collected photographs much in the same way as a red Indian did scalps or a small boy cigarette-cards. Not one of the faces that smiled at her from the corner-table had ever provided her with a real thrill. She had never regarded them in any more serious light than that of useful dummies with which one indulged in bayonet practice until such time as one lighted upon a real front and found real men to pit one's wits against.

Somewhere beyond the smoke-screen put up by her second cigarette since breakfast, Christine's battle-front sweltered in sub-tropical sunshine—a mid-Mediterranean island of orange and lemon groves, Moorish *patios* and watch-towers perched on dizzy heights over the ocean, and quaint, canopied *carretas* creaking over the dusty roads to the market from the farm. Christine, who had squeezed out every ounce of information that the Mackenzies, the Public Library and Cook's could offer, screwed up her eyes and dreamed of bull-fights, the fierce dances of a wild and passionate race and the gentle, throbbing music of the guitar.

George, who with all his failings had some of the instincts of a gentleman, jeopardised the unsullied paintwork of a new two-seater in taking his sister and her luggage to Victoria.

"Cheerio, Chris!" he called through the carriage door. "Send the *mater* some post-cards when you think of it and write to me if you're in a hole."

Christine had snuggled into a corner seat and was sorting through the heap of magazines he had bought for her.

"Right-o!" she returned. "You might give my bike a look-over while I'm away. There's a puncture in the front wheel. I shan't be in a hole, thanks all the same."

"You never know," answered George with wisdom—and the train moved out.

The wild thrill of her first great adventure being marred by a sudden sinking feeling within, she crossed to the window and

looked out. George, the continental idiot, was standing well in evidence in the distance, waving a handkerchief!

She returned to her place, feeling just a little choky and horribly alone, to find that the compartment had attracted one other occupant, a tall, broad-shouldered man in a Harris tweed coat that scented the air, and flannel bags that had lost their crease and bagged perceptibly at the knees. He was stowing a brown canvas suit-case and a bulky, untidy parcel away on the rack, and he smiled at her as she passed.

"This your first trip?" he inquired, wiping the dust from the rack on to his trousers.

Christine flushed.

"I—er—I haven't been this way before," she admitted.

Her fellow-traveller looked out of the window.

"It's raining like old boots," he announced, "but I fancy we shall have a smooth crossing. Are you a good sailor?"

"Pretty good," said Christine, who had never had a proper opportunity of knowing whether she was or not.

With a view to avoiding a conversation which might tend to trick her into an admission of her inexperience, she picked up a magazine and pretended to read. Halfway through the first page she glanced up to find that he had arranged himself very comfortably on the opposite seat and was busily filling a pipe.

For the simple reason that he did not appear to be looking in her direction she hazarded a look in his. She saw a man of thirty or so, with a tanned face that just missed being handsome and a shock of unruly fair hair. His hands were well-formed and capable-looking, his brown brogue shoes displaying beneath the polish unmistakable signs of age.

A label, dangling from the shapeless parcel in the rack above him, caught her eye. She was in the act of deciphering the bold, hand-printed characters, when she heard his voice.

"Why bother?" he laughed. "Derek Steel's my name!"

A moment later she had caught the infection of his smile.

"I'm so sorry," she endeavoured to apologise. "It was frightfully rude of me, but——"

"Not at all," said Steel. "It must have been most tantalising. I think in all fairness, though, that you ought to tell me yours."

"Maddison," said the girl.

He raised his brows.

"Just Maddison?"

She made a little grimace.

"Christine Maddison. Now have I paid my debt in full?"

"Absolutely. Christine Maddison, eh? I rather like that. And the gentleman who bought you all those papers and saw you off——?"

"My brother George, you mean."

Steel clasped his hands together and heaved a deep sigh of relief.

"Heaven be praised for that!"

She opened her eyes very wide.

"What makes you say that?"

"Oh, I don't know. So you're going abroad for the first time, and just praying to heaven the jolly old boat won't go without you, or your luggage fall between the vessel and the dock or your passport prove to be invalid!"

"I'm not!" retorted Christine with a show of indignation. "All that concerns me is whether I shall be sick or not. I should hate to be sick. It's so undignified!"

"And uncomfortable," added Steel; "beastly uncomfortable!"

"But you've never been?"

"Haven't I?"

"But not on a Channel crossing?"

He paused to reflect.

"I succumbed," he confessed at length, "on a wind-jammer off *Port au Prince.* That was some years ago, of course, when I was a cadet in the Merchant Service. I don't think I've ever been beaten since, but I've never really felt certain either."

"*Port au Prince!*" echoed Christine. "How perfectly thrilling!"

"It wasn't," he contradicted. "It was horribly depressing!"

By the time they reached Folkestone she had discovered that he was a painter, and that his present destination was Paris. It appeared that he had been many things—sailor, engineer, clerk and navvy, and that he was more proud of the last than of any other achievement, even the mysterious stroke of good fortune that had rendered it possible for him to devote his undivided attention to art. She knew, long before this, however, that he had a masterful personality.

She found herself on the boat, with a chair on the sheltered side and a waterproof cover for her knees, hardly knowing how she had got there. A similar phenomenon revealed itself at Boulogne: Steel, without any show

of haste or excitement, secured corner-seats on the Paris-bound express and tickets for both of them for the first luncheon session in the restaurant-car.

Christine, feeling her old self now that she had survived and vanquished the dread nightmare of *mal-de-mer* and set foot, unscathed, on soil that was so obviously foreign, began to resent his way of turning what had promised to be a glorious adventure into a mere conducted tour. She was sorry, too, that she had told him she was stopping in Paris.

Staggering down miles of corridors towards the midday meal behind a broad expanse of Harris tweed, she made one or two definite resolutions: she would show this managing young man that she was not so much a stranger to foreign languages as he appeared to suppose, and she would not attempt to prolong their friendship after the Gare du Nord.

As soon as she had found a place in the restaurant-car, she put her first resolve into action. Catching an attendant's eye, she ordered a half-bottle of *Graves Supérieure.* Apparently she put the emphasis on the wrong syllable, for the man produced and opened a bottle of bubbling *Perrier* water, and, upon this being rejected, a large bottle of *bière*!

Steel, who had been regarding this incident with an amused smile, soothed the gesticulating waiter into a state of tranquillity and put the matter right.

"It's perfectly ridiculous!" protested Christine, fully aware that her first attempt at French had attracted the attention of the occupants of at least four tables. "I asked for *Graves* quite clearly."

Steel nodded.

"He tried to guess what you meant," he said, "and missed the 'bus badly. They're always in a frightful rush, you know. They've got to squeeze in at least two more lunches before we reach Paris, and possibly an early tea."

It certainly sounded all right, but it hardly explained why the attendant had understood Steel perfectly from the very moment he took part in the conversation. Christine, flaying a sardine with her fork, realised that her volunteer guide had scored a point. Twenty minutes later she retaliated somewhat feebly by insisting on paying for her own lunch.

At the Gare du Nord, however, she was adamant.

"Good-bye," she said. "Thanks ever so much for all you've done. It's been a topping trip."

She had turned away and was hurrying after her blue-coated porter when Steel caught her up.

"Just a minute," he called. "Where are you stopping?"

"I don't know."

He pushed a visiting-card into her hand.

"I've written the name of an hotel on the back," he explained. "You'll find it central, clean and cheap. If you tell the manager you're a friend of mine, he'll look after you."

"Thanks," said Christine, and tucked it into her bag without looking at it.

He was still hovering round when she got into the taxi.

"I hope you like Mallorca," he continued. "I'm meditating a journey in that direction myself in the near future. I—er—I wish you'd let me see you round Paris. I'm quite free this evening."

Christine shook her head.

"I really couldn't think of it. I've been too much bother to you already."

Steel did not press the point. He watched her overtip the porter and lean back against the shabby upholstery, quite oblivious of the fact that she had given the chauffeur no destination to which to drive!

Smiling softly, he supplied the deficiency himself.

Christine, absorbing impressions of Paris through the taxi-windows, did not remember her omission until she found herself halted outside a small, unpretentious hotel in a narrow turning off the *Avenue de l'Opéra.* The intelligence of Parisian taxi-drivers astounded her. This fellow, acting entirely on his own initiative, had brought her to an establishment which was undeniably central. An examination of a room on the second floor proved it to be clean, and, at the French equivalent of half a crown, decidedly cheap. There was a radiator by the window and the nickel-plated taps over the wash-basin produced hot and cold water according to label.

She opened the smaller of her two suitcases and laughed at her own reflection in a mirror. It was the first thing she had been allowed to do for herself. She had secured ideal accommodation without the assistance of her self-appointed guide, philosopher and friend! All the experience in the universe could not have served her better!

A dip into her hand-bag shattered this illusion somewhat rudely. It revealed that



the names on the *Advice to Travellers* on the wall and on the back of Derek Steel's card were identical!

The girl in the little office on the first floor directed her to a restaurant in the Boulevard des Italiens, and she booked a seat at the *Folies-Bergères* at an agency near the Louvre. George, she remembered, had visited that theatre during an Easter football-tour, and had spoken highly, if a little vaguely, of its merits.

The little, black-bearded man at the agency raised his eyebrows at her request for a seat, charged her fifty francs, and endeavoured to prolong the conversation. The foremost of an impatient queue relieved her from what might have been an embarrassing situation, and she hurried through



"He was seized violently from behind, and lifted clean from the pavement."

the glass door into a thoroughfare surging with people and reverberating to the incessant mingling of a thousand shrill-toned motor-horns.

She taxied to the *Folies-Bergères*, presented her ticket, and drifted through an immense entrance-hall, where a jazz-band played, to her seat in the stalls.

The performance was a revelation to Christine, a revelation in stage-craft—and other things. She was alternately glad and sorry that Derek Steel had not accompanied her. Throughout the long interval she remained glued to her seat, forced at last to admit, to herself at least, that a reliable male escort sometimes had its

uses. On her way out at the conclusion of the performance, a tall, dark man in evening-dress pushed to her side and tried to take her arm.

Christine felt herself going hot all over.

Adventure, viewed from the placid security of a white and green suburban bedroom, and the same quantity encountered face to face, in an atmosphere of shrill laughter, painted faces and oddly luminous eyes, were two utterly different things.

Panic-stricken, she forced her way through the crowd towards the cloakroom and her wrap, only to find her tormentor waiting at the exit, debonair and smiling.

"Ah! There you are, *mademoiselle*!" he greeted her. "I am so glad! I thought that I had lost you!"

Christine gave him a look that would have withered one of her bayonet-dummies, but did not disturb the stranger one iota. She tried to sweep past him into the street, but he placed himself directly in her path.

"You will allow me the honour of driving you home, *mademoiselle*," he suggested, still with that mocking smile playing on his lips.

"No, thank you," retorted the girl. "I am looking for a taxi."

He spread out his hands.

"A taxi, *mademoiselle*! Outside the *Folies-Bergères* and at this time of night! It is an absolute impossibility."

"Very well," she returned coldly; "then I shall walk."

She succeeded in avoiding him by a swift manœuvre, and dashed across the narrow street under the very nose of a taxi's radiator. Without the ghost of an idea where she was going, she began walking rapidly. A car caught her up at the next corner, a long, shining limousine throttled down to an uncomfortable five miles an hour, and from an open window her persistent admirer of the theatre crowd leaned out.

"It was too bad of you, *mademoiselle*," he protested. "Too bad altogether! Just when we were becoming such good friends! If it hadn't been for that blue cloak of yours with the charming fur collar, I believe I should have lost you altogether!"

He climbed out on to the pavement and caught her arms.

He was endeavouring to drag her towards the door of the vehicle when he was seized violently from behind, lifted clean from the pavement and pitched at full length into the gutter.

Christine, blinking desperately, felt herself taken by an elbow and forced through the group of curious people that had gathered to witness the excitement.

"I tell you what it is, young woman," said the familiar voice of Derek Steel. "You're badly in need of someone to look after you."

The girl was on the verge of tears.

"That beast insulted me!" she declared.

"Well! What did you expect in a quarter like this? The only girls that come here alone are those that want to be insulted."

He hailed a cab and helped her in.

"How did you get here?" she demanded.

Steel smiled.

"I'm afraid I've been following you most of the evening. I felt it in my bones that something of this sort would happen."

Christine looked out of the window.

"It was very absurd of you," she said. "I can't think why you did it."

Steel had his hands clasped between his knees. Glancing at him, she saw that beneath the neat rain-coat he wore a dinner-jacket suit. He looked so astonishingly smart and well-groomed that it was difficult to connect him with the wearer of the baggy trousers and Harris tweed.

"I don't know why I did it myself," he declared, "especially after the way you treated me at the station. I don't usually push myself where I'm not wanted, but you seemed so cocksure you could look after yourself—and I was equally convinced you couldn't! You were a mutt, weren't you?"

"I think you're perfectly horrible," retorted Christine, as the taxi pulled up at her hotel. "I shouldn't be surprised if you arranged that ghastly affair, just—just to prove yourself right."

He opened the door and assisted her out.

"I didn't," he said, "but you can think what you like, of course. You'll find my 'phone number on that card I gave you. If you can persuade yourself to regard me in a better light by the morning, ring me up and we'll drive round and see things. If you can't—here's the best of luck to the Mallorcan adventure!"

He paid the taximan, raised his hat and strode off into the darkness.

* * * * *

Christine wrote the whole of that episode down in her diary under the heading of *Adventure No.* 1.

The personality of Derek Steel remained with her long after she had gone to bed. She went to sleep thinking of him, saw him in

her dreams and woke up with his picture still vivid in her memory. A struggle with herself which lasted the entire morning resulted in a conviction that she had behaved like a little beast, and the least she could do was to ring him up. She reached the pitch of reading his number on the card and locating the hotel telephone—and recoiled aghast before the prospect of a 'phone-call in a foreign tongue.

In the afternoon torrential rain rendered a motor drive around Paris out of the question. An hour before the train for Barcelona was scheduled to depart, she repaired to the writing-room and possessed herself of a postcard bearing a much exaggerated photograph of the hotel in sepia on a pale buff ground.

"Sorry about last night," she wrote, fully believing that she would never set eyes on him again. "I think I was annoyed because you were right—and I was so hopelessly wrong. Good luck to the painting. CHRISTINE."

She had affixed the stamp before she had realised how she had signed it. It was touch and go whether she destroyed it and wrote another, but she let it go and took the lift to her room, flushed and unusually excited.

Towards half-past three on the following afternoon she arrived in Barcelona and drove to the *Bristol*, with nothing to record in her diary but details of an uncomfortable night spent in a crowded carriage and memories of an elderly Spaniard who had insisted on helping her through the Customs at Port Bou.

At Barcelona she found the sun; two days later, when she steamed into Palma-di-Mallorca at breakfast-time, the quaint, irregular buildings that fringed the coast were silhouetted against a sky of deepest blue.

It had never occurred to Christine that Steel had been serious when he spoke of coming to Mallorca. It was just a fanciful dream of hers, conjured up nightly between undressing and going to sleep, or on a dizzy pinnacle among the olives, with the tinkling of sheep-bells in her ears and the waters of Soller or Miramar glistening gold in the sunshine hundreds of feet below. She tried to imagine how he would look and what he would say when they met—and yet, when he actually appeared in the flesh and the same tweed coat at the sea-door of the Alhambra Restaurant, she fled precipitately by the other.

She knew instinctively that it was herself and not painting that had brought him there. That fateful signature *Christine* loomed up in her imagination until each letter seemed bigger than the postcard upon which it had been written. She felt that she had lured him there under false pretences, but she bolted for Pollenza by the first train because she was not so certain that the pretences were false. Somewhere deep within she knew that she wanted Steel, knew that at journey's end she was bound to surrender unconditionally to this masterful man. It was significant that, in her hurried departure for the north-east coast, she remembered to apprise the hotel-clerk of her destination.

A four-hour journey by train, *diligence* and dilapidated Ford car brought her to a straggling line of cottages fringing a wide bay. There were two small hotels in the place and a variety of *fondas*. She chose the *Mar y Cel* because it was more remote, and waited a week for the coming of Derek Steel. At first she felt grateful for the respite, then angry with him for ignoring so obvious a clue, then dreadfully afraid that he should have misunderstood her departure and returned disconsolate to Paris.

On the eighth day she embarked on a walk to Alcudia by the coast, crossing a torrent knee-deep at low tide and passing through clumps of prickly-pear with crimson fruit growing on the edges of fat, thorny leaves. She came presently, by way of the bull-ring, upon a sleepy town surrounded by Spanish and Roman walls and a Roman gateway, as thick as a tunnel, that had stood there since the islands sent slingers to swell the ranks of Cæsar's legions.

She entered the tunnel almost fearfully, remembering that centurion, Moorish captain and Spaniard had passed that way ages before Alcudia sank into oblivion and slept. She was half-way through when the sound of shouting behind her made her turn in time to see a young bull, with metal nose-ring and trailing rope, cantering straight towards her. She screamed aloud and ran for dear life, all thoughts of romance hammered out by the drumming of hoofs behind.

Out in the sunlight, intent only on finding a refuge from the danger which threatened, she ran into the arms of an artist who had left camp-stool and easel at her first shrill cry of alarm.

She grabbed at his sleeve and pointed desperately.

"It's a bull!" she panted. "It's got loose somehow. What shall we do?"

But the animal, startled at the recurrence of daylight after the gloom of the gate, and finding a broad space over which to pursue its flight, veered to the right and trotted along the road that Cæsar's men had trod, with a heated peasant in hot pursuit.

It was the smell of Harris tweed that brought her to her senses, and that deep, bantering voice that had made her mindful of her short-comings from the very first.



"She straightened his tie because it annoyed her and because she wanted something to excuse her looking down."

"Poor little Christine! That fellow's quite annoyed with you, you know. He wanted you to turn it back!"

The girl gasped.

"Turn it back! But it was a bull!"

"Only a youngster. Think how honest I am to admit that. I might have stood

over you and driven it off—and become your hero for ever after!"

She observed him thoughtfully.

"Will you swear to me you didn't pay that man to let that horrible thing loose?"

He took her by both arms and made her look at him.

"Look here, young woman," he demanded, "what on earth do you think I am?"

She straightened his tie because it annoyed her and because she wanted something to excuse her looking down.

"I think you're the nicest man I have ever met," she replied, "but you might have asked me that a week ago, instead of keeping me in suspense!"

He kissed her shamelessly, in the open, before a massive gateway that must have witnessed many curious and inspiring things and in full view of a labourer returning triumphantly with a young bull on a rope.

"What were you painting?" she inquired presently, by way of saying something coherent.

"Nothing," he admitted. "Absolutely nothing. I was just smoking and waiting for you to come out."

She watched him compressing his paraphernalia into reasonably portable compass.

"I should like you to paint me that gateway," she said at length. "It's an important landmark to me, you know. I entered it a free woman—and came out an abject slave!"

"I'll paint it to-morrow," he promised. "I rather like it myself!"

AN IDYLL.

CUPID came down one starlight night
In search of sport and play;
He saw my lady in her bower,
Full beautiful as day.

Her hair was soft with silken sheen,
Her grey eyes sparkled bright,
Her rosy cheeks no blemish held,
Her foot was small and light.

Cupid with envy looked on her,
With passion fierce and hot;
He changed her to a sunflower gay,
To deck his garden plot.

Then, left without my lady fair,
I languished full sore,
Till, taking pity on my plight,
Cupid came down once more.

He took me to my lady fair,
Within his garden neat,
And planted me, a daisy, there,
To worship at her feet.

JOAN WEBBE.

GAMBLER'S HOPE

By J. J. Bell

Author of "Wee Macgreegor," etc.

"In yonder well lies treasure, ancient, rare,
Rich gems,—a woman's hope, a man's despair."
ANON.

SYNOPSIS OF EARLIER CHAPTERS.

In a London hotel Flora Ballantyre, a Highland girl recently married, is suddenly called upon to "mother" a wee Spanish boy whose "madre" has died.

Nearly a quarter of a century passes. Flora, now Lady Ballantyre, and seven years a widow, visits Luis de Lara in Spain because she has been gambling and is in serious financial difficulties. Though a dozen years separate them, she is well aware that Luis's childish adoration has taken with manhood a warmer form.

She is hoping that her son, Steve, whose money she has also risked, will become engaged to Winifred Charters, who has £80,000 of her own. But during a yachting cruise in Scottish waters Steve has become attached to Ailsa Maclean, and he is arranging another cruise in the *Miranda* during the following August. Luis agrees to join the cruise, partly as a distraction from remorse (he has unintentionally killed a Spaniard during a brawl), partly because he is interested in a story of a Spanish dagger and a scrap of parchment possessed by Ailsa's father, Hector Maclean, concerning buried treasure to which his own father's papers make reference.

Faced with further depressions in "Flossies," Lady Ballantyre, though greatly ashamed, gets Luis to sell pictures and other heirlooms and place the money to her account. These proceedings arouse the suspicions of his rascally deaf and dumb Spanish secretary, Gaspar Muñez, especially when Gaspar finds that Luis has discovered the fragment of bloodstained parchment relating to the treasure buried at Tobermory. Luis's first hope is that he may have the privilege, as a good Catholic, of restoring the jewels to the Church. Lady Ballantyre, however, sees in a successful search the possibility of restoring her fortunes. It is a "Gambler's Hope," and Luis, from his great love for her, eventually compromises with conscience.

At Tobermory, Hector Maclean and Ailsa entertain the *Miranda* party on their arrival and introduce Hector's young partner, Ronald, who has long been in love with Ailsa. Hector's co-operation is essential if the treasure is to be recovered. He is a canny Scotsman. Can his interest be aroused? If so, it is only likely if benefit will accrue to Ailsa, on whom he dotes.

Meanwhile Father Macdonald, an old friend of Maclean's, has arrived unexpectedly at Tobermory, and a strange motor launch appears in the bay to land a mysterious foreigner, who gives the name of M. François Dracquier when booking a room at the hotel. Luis begins to suspect that his secretary in Spain is taking a hand in the game.

XI.

DINNER over, Lady Ballantyre's little party came on deck. Two seamen, smoking their pipes in the bows, were the only members of the crew in sight, and in the clear dusk the yacht had a vacant aspect. Hector Maclean was not the only person on board to have the thought which he now voiced to his hostess.

"It is very few people for so big a boat, Flora."

"Later on, perhaps, it will be different. As I told you, Hector, I am sadly in need of peace and quiet."

"Yes, yes, you told me. It is a fearful life you are leading in London!"

"You would not have your Ailsa lead such a life?"

"Well, now, I would not be saying that exactly. For a wee while, it might not be so bad. When one is young—no offence, Flora—but when one is very young, and

has the money . . . and the position. . . ." He appeared to meditate.

"Ailsa," said Lady Ballantyre, gently, "seems to be happy in Tobermory."

Swiftly he looked up.

"I hope to God she is all that," he said almost fiercely. "But if she is not . . ." He puffed vainly at his cigar, took it from his teeth, and eyed it with regret. "Flora, I ask your pardon; I am sorry, but I cannot enjoy your splendid cigar."

"Allow me." She took and tossed it over the rail. "Smoke your pipe, my dear."

With a grateful grin he fetched from one tail of his old dress-coat a shabby pipe, from the other a piece of black twist, and from his vest a knife. Sticking the pipe in the corner of his jaw, he proceeded to slice the tobacco.

"How many years is it since I saw that done?" she remarked.

"Wait till you feel the smell, and you will be back in your father's house!" he said, smiling. "Ah, but you were the beautiful lass then, Flora! There were sore hearts, yes, and angry ones too, when Ballantyre took you away from Mull."

She laughed quietly. "I passed one of them in the town to-day, and it did not know me."

"It would be too broken to remember!" He chuckled at his own wit as he rubbed the cut tobacco between his hands.

"I passed a priest, too——"

"Ah, that would be Father Macdonald, a good friend of mine. You will be seeing him at the house, very likely." He proceeded to explain the friendship and Father Macdonald's presence in Mull.

Afterwards he remembered his pipe, tucked the shreds into the bowl, and brought out matches.

"But now, Flora," he said between puffs, "tell me—when does your marvellous young friend wish to see my bit of old parch——?"

"*'Sh!*"

His blank stare gave place to a look of apology. "I am very sorry, Flora," he murmured. "I am afraid it was yon fine fizzy wine of yours. I should not have taken the two glasses. I am thinking now, there was more in the two glasses than in four of whisky. But I will remember now, though I do not understand why——"

"Very soon, you will understand everything, Hector. In the morning I will bring Señor de Lara to see you—in your private office——"

"But are you not for sailing in the morning?"

"We may sail at noon—but the *Miranda* is not a mail-steamer."

Ignoring the remark—"And so I brought it with me," he said, and touched his hip.

"M'm!" she muttered, seeing a difficulty.

"And the dagger, too," he whispered, repeating the gesture.

"The dagger!" Her hand flew to her lips.

"The old Spanish dagger—surely you remember it."

"Yes, yes—but what on earth made you think of bringing it to-night? The Señor will be interested, of course, but he could have seen it another time." She had hoped the dagger would not be introduced at all. It would be so easy to create a wrong atmosphere.

"But you are forgetting, Flora—the dagger always goes with the—other thing. Always it has been so." His tone was a little offended.

"Well, well, Hector, it does not really matter," she said kindly. "Only, I used to hate the sight of the dagger, and it might have been simpler to have our meeting in your office. However, I dare say I can arrange for the three of us to have a quiet talk here, later in the evening. . . . Now I want you to come and meet my captain. His father was a Tiree man. You can have a chat with him in his room while I attend to some letters for the morning mail. Come along!"

A little way up the deck the four young people were smoking and chattering together. Maclean glanced at them; regarding his pipe, which had gone out, he said softly:

"I would be having no great objections, Flora, to a chat with that Miss Charters, now that I am used to her long legs. I would be glad to hear from her about the life a wealthy young lady, like herself, will be leading in London."

"You will have plenty of opportunities of interviewing Winifred," said Lady Ballantyre, maintaining her gravity; "but I promised the captain you would visit him soon after dinner."

"Very good; just as you please," he answered resignedly. "And what would you be calling the colour of her dress, such as it is?"

"Peach."

"Just so! A very nice colour, to be sure. And how do you think Ailsa would be suited with a peach dress—of a larger size?"

"Ailsa could not look better than she

does in that apple-green frock. Now come——"

"Are you meaning that, Flora, and can I be telling Ailsa you said it?"

"Certainly. But Ailsa——"

"Because, you see, Ailsa was greatly annoyed because she could not be showing more of her bosom, owing to the whiteness and brownness of her skin. I told her she was showing plenty for a young lass like herself. It is all very well, when a woman is getting on, to be calling attention to——"

"Ailsa's frock is just right, Hector, and nothing could be more charming than the fine tan on her skin. Now, please——"

"And can I be telling her that you said it? For it will be a great pleasure to her, I am sure."

"Tell her, by all means. But if you don't stop talking about her, I shall suspect that the drop of champagne has really gone to your head."

"Well, well," he said, submitting to be led to the captain's room under the bridge. "Maybe it is the champagne, Flora; oh, very likely, it is the champagne."

Yet there was no sign of anything of the sort, once he was closeted with the captain, a stern abstainer, whose eye would have detected the effects of a glass of cider. It was only Maclean's little way. He had wanted to talk to his cousin about those intimate small matters, but modesty forbade until he pretended to himself that he was not quite sober.

About to go below, Lady Ballantyre paused in the doorway of the deck-house. On the still air the laugh of Winifred Charters rose clear and a trifle shrill.

"Really! How extraordinary! You never hunt, never play golf, and scarcely any tennis! What *do* you do, Miss Maclean?"

"Indeed, I am very sorry, Miss Charters," Ailsa answered, and her soft voice had never sounded softer, "but I am afraid I do nothing at all. Only, I was thinking, if there will be a breeze to-morrow, you might care to try Ronald's wee sail-boat——"

"A wet business in any sort of breeze," put in Stephen, who had resented Winifred's speech, "and the boat takes a bit of sailing out in the Sound."

"Thanks; but I fear I have no use for those small boats," said Miss Charters.

"They give excellent sport," Luis dryly observed; "too excellent for me! Have you something else, Miss Maclean, to offer Miss Charters?"

To Ailsa it was as though he had said, "Courage! Pay her back!" and once more she found herself liking the Señor.

"I was thinking also," she said, softly as before, with a mild glance at the other girl, "that, if you are fond of the water, we might swim to the island and back before breakfast."

"The island?"

Stephen pointed to the rocky guardian of the bay, cold and distant in the dusk. "A pretty stiff swim, Winifred!"

"Ailsa!" Lady Ballantyre's voice came sweetly from the deck-house. "Will you spare me a minute?"

Lady Ballantyre, as we may believe, was at heart sympathetic towards her kinswoman, but she could not afford to take the chance of Winifred's being put at a disadvantage before her son.

Ailsa responded at once. Luis took a step after her, but Stephen had taken two.

"Stephen!" called Winifred.

"Yes?" He turned—impatiently, perhaps.

Under her light shoulder wrap, the girl shivered daintily. "Your Highland air is a little too keen for this poor Southron. Would you mind asking my maid for my fur coat?"

"Righto." He hurried on to the deck-house.

Lady Ballantyre and Ailsa had already gone below; but he waited, and before long Ailsa came up, wearing a gay wrap which her hostess had insisted on providing.

"Ailsa!"

"Well?" Her smile was friendly.

"What is the matter?"

"With me? Nothing!"

"Ever since we met this afternoon you have been avoiding me."

"But that is nonsense, Steve."

"It is the wretched truth, Ailsa. We have had scarcely a word together. All the afternoon——"

"All the afternoon I was a hostess."

"But since we came on board——"

"You have been a host."

"But, Ailsa, I do not see why——"

"It is very simple. Duty—pleasant duty, of course!"

"Duty?"

"Just so, Steve—and now you are forgetting your duty to your guest. Miss Charters will be perishing——"

"She can . . . Ailsa!"

"Well, what is it?"

"Your last letter allowed me to believe that——"

"Oh, that letter! I was in a daft mood when I was writing it. But, then, I am never knowing what I will be saying in a letter!"

"Ailsa"—with creditable restraint—"your letter told me that you would be glad to see me again."

"And am I not glad? I am sure I cannot think what you are making the fuss about, Steve. And even if I were not glad, do you imagine a Tobermory girl cannot be polite?"

Stung, he exclaimed: "I had imagined a Tobermory girl would be—honest."

Her head went up. "Now you have said it! Be pleased to let me pass."

"I'm sorry, Ailsa." He continued to bar the passage. "All day I've been worrying to know why you are so different from your letter."

"I have told you it was a daft letter—and, anyway, there is nothing to be making a song about."

"You speak as if we were not even friends."

She melted. "It is not I," she began, and froze again. But her voice was kinder. "Come, Steve, it is a bee in your bonnet. Be sensible, or I must be asking Lady Ballantyre to let me go home with my father to-night. Now, let me pass and attend to the wish of your guest. Poor Miss Charters——"

"You are my guest as much as——"

"Well, well, and so I am, Steve," she said sweetly. "But I am also only your—cousin."

She slipped past him and gained the deck. Miss Charters was laughing at some foolish remark of the Señor's, but her eyes were not looking his way.

Ailsa turned in the other direction, her head held high. But once beyond reach of the lights of the deck-house, she let it droop. . . . She came to a halt under the bridge, where it was almost dark, the ports of the captain's room being curtained. Inside, the captain and her father were going at it, hammer and tongs, in the Gaelic.

To herself, she sighed: "I wish I had never learned the English. It was made for untruth. I wish I had never seen any place but Tobermory."

She heard her father's voice raised to that superior pitch which sometimes made her want both to laugh and cry.

"My daughter Ailsa is very well able to hold her own with any young lady from the South; for she has the true modesty and the true pride!"

She checked the sob; threw up her head again; turned about and retraced her steps, a haughtiness in every one of them. None, least of all Miss Charters, should have reason to think she had been moping.

In the light from the deck-house Stephen was helping Winifred with her coat. The Señor had gone. Stephen, Ailsa noted, was grave and pale; but she fancied a caress in the hands that held the dark fur over the white shoulders; and it was no deception of jealousy that showed her the English girl bending back her boy's head till it must surely have touched the man's lips. . . .

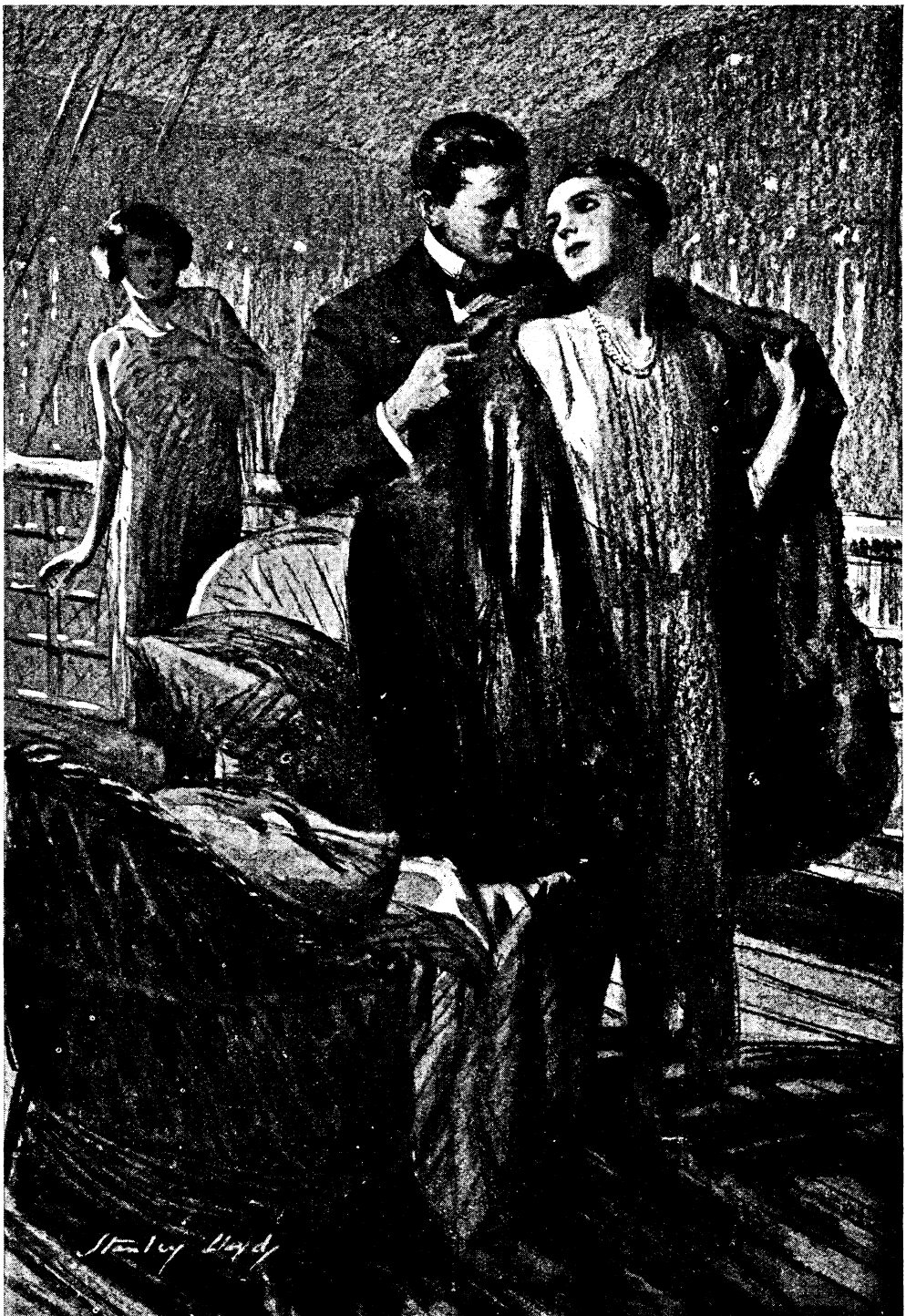
Ailsa had had her flirtations; but they had been the lightest of responses to the lightest of advances. She could not comprehend the nature of the girl who offered herself, or that of the man who accepted. The little scene hurt, but also it stirred her contempt. If her eyes were sad, there was a curl on her lip. Well, well; it was finished—finished before it had begun! For, after all, it had been but the dream of a dream. She would be foolish no more. . . .

She heard Stephen say, "Give it me"—the discarded wrap—"and I'll take it downstairs"—and he glanced in her direction. "Thanks," answered Winifred, following the glance, "but I shall keep it by me. Take me for a turn, Steve—no, round the other way." They drifted out of sight.

Luis stepped from the deck-house.

"Ah, Miss Maclean, I have been looking for you," he said, approaching.

Her gaze scanned the dark, almost beautiful face, and saw that it was grave. The slightest smile then would have earned him her hatred. He must, she told herself, have seen her go round towards the bridge a few minutes ago. Then why had he not sought her on the deck? Her gaze wavered and fell; under the tan on her cheek glowed shame. Had she, somehow, betrayed her trouble to this man, this stranger? How awful! Yet in her discomfiture was but little resentment. About this man was that which soothed, comforted, encouraged. She had felt it at the first moment of their meeting. It came to her now that he would be a good friend in a difficulty.



" In the light from the deck-house Stephen was helping Winifred with her coat."

Certainly, his pretence of seeking her indoors had been that of a gentleman.

"I went along the deck," she managed to say. "It—it is a fine night."

"It is lovely. Do you prefer to stay outside? We might count the lights of Tobermory."

"Maybe that would not take so very long." She smiled, able to face him again with frank eyes. "Lady Ballantyre is writing letters," she added irrelevantly.

"Letters are one of the twelve million plagues of civilization. Don't tell me you want to go and do likewise. I have found some music in the lounge. Will you come and try it with me?"

"After your playing, I can be no good at all, at all," she said. "But I will come."

There were pieces she knew, by Elgar, Sibelius, Coleridge-Taylor, and others, also a bunch of new fox-trots and waltzes. Handicapped by her diffidence, she began very badly, but with the patience which is not apparent he gave her the friendly guidance that leads to confidence, the cheerful criticism that stirs aspiration. At the end of an hour she had caught his enthusiasm. Over her faults she made little sounds of exasperation, but they came from smiling lips.

Later, in a pause, she looked up, saying: "Señor de Lara, I have never heard the violin played as you play it."

He laughed joyously. "It would seem, then, that the musicians of Tobermory bar all instruments but the bagpipes!"

"But I have heard great violinists in the cities, and we have some good players in Tobermory."

"Then there is something on the *Miranda* that has bewitched us both. I play a little less badly than usual, and you are kinder than you ought to be." He laughed again, and she laughed with him.

"My father thinks you are a marvellous man," she said.

"Please encourage the delightful delusion, Miss Maclean." He bent over the music, his head close to hers. "Let us have Sibelius again—not the 'Triste'; the other little valse."

"You are fond of it?"

It was on his tongue to answer, "I shall always be fond of it after to-night," but utterance of the cheap little compliment was beyond him. "Yes," he said, rising erect and drawing a quaint flourish from the E string; "it reminds me of a girl in Spain."

In a deck shelter, snuggling into the collar of her coat, Winifred remarked:

"I'm beginning to wonder if I may not have been wrong about Miss Maclean and her handsome Highlander. What do you think?"

Stephen's laugh was quite a good imitation. "You know I never think after 8 p.m. Would you like to go inside?"

"I'm not cold now." She covered a yawn. "But I'm afraid I'm getting sleepy, and shall want to go to bed early. What is that lovely glow in the sky above the mountain?"

"Moonrise."

"Ah, I must wait for that."

Across the water came the sound of a bell, its tone sweetened by distance.

"Ten o'clock in Tobermory. Curfew," said Stephen. "I expect Mr. Maclean will want to be put on shore soon. He's an early bird." Which was an inaccuracy.

"He's an old dear," said Winifred. "Will a boat come out for him?"

"The launch will take him ashore—and I shall see him to his house."

"Is he afraid to go home in the dark?" she asked, not with perfect good-humour.

"He'll be lonely without his daughter, and I've had scarcely a word with him, and we are sailing in the morning. Besides"—with a bow—"you are going to bed."

"Not till I have seen the moon!"

"It is nearly up now. Yes, there it comes!"

"I feel it! I believe there is warmth in it!" Winifred opened her coat and lay back, ready for the silver bath which, she knew, would not lessen her beauty.

Hector Maclean came along from the captain's room.

"Old idiot!" said Winifred, under her breath.

"It is a fine night, Miss Charters," he said, a little shyly, and turned to Stephen. "I have just been having a crack with your skipper. For a teetotaller, he is a very interesting man. But I have a great admiration for teetotal sailors—when I am a passenger."

"If you have been talking Gaelic all this time, you deserve a whisky-and-soda," said Stephen.

"Oh, there is no hurry—no terrible hurry! Who is making the music yonder?"

"Your daughter and Señor de Lara," Winifred replied, drawing together the lapels of her coat. "Don't they play as if they had been made for each other?"

"Well, well, I did not think that Ailsa had the agility. I will go and see——"

Just then the music stopped, and Lady Ballantyre came from the deck-house.

"I have been ordering Ailsa to bed," she announced, "and have come to do the same with you, Winifred, my dear. One can do with a long sleep in this air. You too, Stephen. You look fagged."

"I am going to see Mr. Maclean home," answered Stephen. "But, first, I am going to give him a drink. He is parched with talking Gaelic."

Maclean chuckled. "It is a very useful language, the Gaelic. But I will not have you to come ashore, young man. It would look as if I was needing your support after the sodda water. Besides, I am going to have a wee crack with your mother—about some good investments."

"What about the Señor?" asked Stephen.

"The Señor, as you know, is a night bird," Lady Ballantyre replied. "I do not attempt to interfere with his folly. But in your case, my boy, I insist. I will see to it that Hector's thirst is relieved."

"I am thinking," said Maclean, with another chuckle, "I am thinking the relief will not be so great as you would have made it, Stephen, my lad! Well, well, lead me to it, Flora!"

Winifred, who had been looking bored, held out her hand. "Please, Steve."

He drew her up. She slipped from her coat before he could do anything but receive it from her hands.

"I must feel the moonshine!"

There she stood, arms wide to the radiance, a sight, as the old folks say, for sore eyes—perhaps for a sore heart too.

But the moment passed; passed also the wonder from the young man's face.

With a small laugh that held a sigh, and a shiver, she turned towards the warmer light streaming from the deck-house doorway.

In the lounge—

"Good night," said Ailsa.

Luis took the brown hand, and let it go. Erect, he regarded her with kindly, smiling eyes. "Good night, Miss Maclean; sleep well!"

Impulsively she said, "You have been very kind to-night to a silly girl," and went out quickly to join the others.

His gaze following her, he drew a sharp breath.

"You darling," he said to himself, "who would not wish to be kind to you?"

At the head of the staircase—

"Ailsa, must you go?"

"On your mother's yacht, Steve, I must do as I am told—and I think she is waiting for me downstairs. . . . And Miss Charters has gone."

"Just five minutes, Ailsa."

She shook her head, smiling. "Good night, Steve," she said cheerfully, and ran down.

For a minute or so he stood there, frowning, then turned into the lounge.

"I'm going down to have a drink and turn in," he said, aware that his voice was not quite normal. "Bit too early for you, I suppose."

"I did not do so badly, on the train, last night," Luis replied. "But you are wise. You look tired. For tiredness, I suggest a glass of port. Whisky wakens one up, doesn't it?"

There was a pause.

"Well, good night—Luis," said Stephen, and went out.

Luis had taken a step forward, and now he stood very still, eyeing the hand he had been about to offer. Was it possible that Steve was beginning to see—blood on it? As it fell to his side his whole person took on an air of weariness.

"I am afraid," he said to himself, "some of us are going to be unhappy."

XII.

In the lounge, at eleven o'clock, Lady Ballantyre carefully curtained the window, switched off all lights but one, and quietly shot the little silvery bolt on the white door.

At the last of these precautions Hector Maclean looked up, with a puzzled laugh, saying:

"This is surely a devil of a conspeeracy, Mr. Señor!" and Luis gravely replied:

"It is, Mr. Maclean."

"Stephen has not gone to bed, after all," Lady Ballantyre said, as though she disliked saying it. "He is up on the bridge."

"Then, if you do not mind," said Luis, "I shall go and ask him to join us. I know he will refuse." With a reassuring look at the hostess, he unfastened the door and went out.

"I am not asking questions," said Maclean, breaking a silence, "but I am

thinking you would be none the worse of a dram, Flora." He pointed to a table on which the steward had lately set a refreshment tray, also a tiny tea service, with electric kettle.

Lady Ballantyre shook her head. "Sit down, Hector."

She seated herself at the card table placed directly under the remaining light. "Smoke, if you want."

"I could not be keeping a pipe going just now. . . . I suppose your Mr. Señor will be almost a teetotaller, too. He did not drink your good wine at dinner, and he would not take a dram with me."

"It is possible," she said, a little grimly, "that he may care to take a dram with you, later on. The Señor has always been admirable in his self-restraint."

"He is a marvellous young fellow. It was like magic, the way he made Ailsa play on the piano to-night. I never thought she had the agil——"

Luis came in with a nod that was equivalent to, "As I expected." "Steve says he will stay on the bridge. And, anyhow, I think we would prefer him to come upon a door that was not bolted." His glance at Lady Ballantyre was very kind.

"Yes," she answered, "I accept the reproach, Luis." She pointed to the third chair. "Let us begin."

Luis sat down and, for a moment or two, closed his eyes.

"Now, Hector, if you please," said Lady Ballantyre.

Maclean, who had served on his town's council, cleared his throat.

"Mr. Señor, I am not asking any questions. Maybe you are an antiquarian, though, God knows, you do not look it—but I am not heeding one way or the other. You are a friend of my cousin's, and you were at the War, just like my own sons, and my cousin has asked me to show you a wee bit of old writing that has been in my family for many generations—and you are very welcome. But my cousin was forgetting about another thing that has been in my family for just exactly as long, and the two things always go together. So I must show you them both."

He brought out a sort of wallet of leather, old, but not ancient, and laid it on the baize.

"It was my grandfather who had it made, but the things inside had been allowed to lie about, and one of them had got very dirty, and, indeed, was never properly cleaned till my daughter, Ailsa, took and cleaned it. Now it is a beautiful thing; I dare say I could have sold it many a time."

He untied two little thongs, and laid back the flap. "And it is a thing that will, maybe, interest you, Mr. Señor, more than the writing, because it was made in your own country."

With that he drew out a dagger some ten inches in length—the type of dagger once known as a *misericorde*—around the blade of which was loosely rolled a piece of brown parchment. Removing the parchment, he laid the weapon before Luis. The haft was of a rare workmanship, apparently of silver inlaid with gold; the slender blade, pitted by rust, was now bright, and the point still sharp enough to be dangerous.

Luis regarded it awhile, then bent forward and examined it closely. But he did not touch it. Presently, almost imperceptibly, he winced. Slowly he sat up, his gaze still on the dagger.

"It is indeed a beautiful thing," he said in a voice that sounded constrained. "And its story, Mr. Maclean?"

"It will be a very short story," Maclean answered, with a wag of his shaggy head. "On the night of the day that the *Florencia* was blown up, one, Hector Maclean, was found at the door of his house, with this"—he held up the scrap of parchment, which he had been carefully smoothing out—"in his hand, and this"—he touched the dagger—"in his heart. . . . And that, Mr. Señor, will be all the story."

Lady Ballantyre, who had been watching Luis, saw him give a nod, a nod less of acceptance than of acquiescence.

"And so," said Luis deliberately, "this Hector Maclean, your ancestor and namesake, was murdered by the owner of this dagger."

Maclean rumpled his grey locks. "Well, now, I would hardly be saying so much as all that. I ought to have told you that Hector Maclean's own knife was lying near by—and it was bloody. So there had been a fight, and, for all I know, it was a fair enough one."

"Thank you," said Luis, demurely, "thank you for putting it that way. Otherwise"—he took the dagger by the blade and presented the haft to Maclean—"according to the ancient code, you would be quite in order in using this upon myself." And while Maclean stared, he continued: "For I cannot doubt that this dagger

belonged to one, Luis de Lara, who, in the year 1588, went out with the Armada, and later came home, bearing wounds that were shortly to cause his death. His portrait, which used to hang in my father's study, was painted not long before he sailed, and in that portrait he holds in his hand that dagger." He laid the weapon under Maclean's hand. "Well,"—with a sorry but charming smile—"what are you going to do about it?"

"God bless me, it beats all!" muttered Maclean, and looked from the dagger to Lady Ballantyre, from her to Luis. Then, with a chuckle, he held out his hand. "Bygones are bygones, Mr. Señor. It was a long, long time ago, and I am sure it was a fair fight."

"That is handsome of you," said Luis, taking the clasp.

"And I have known you all those years, Señor," Lady Ballantyre put in, a little foolishly, "without dreaming that we were connected by—blood!" She laughed—and shuddered.

"Yes, yes, it is a wonderful story to be so short," Maclean presently remarked. "Maybe, Mr. Señor," he added half-jokingly, "you will be telling us the truth about this also." And he held out the scrap of parchment.

Luis took it, but did not at once scan it. For him a great moment had arrived. The answer to the tremendous question, "Where?" was in his hand. But it was no glory of riches that blazed before his imagination then. In the centre of the table was an ash-tray carrying matches, and his glance rested on it. Why not strike a bunch and let the flame have the parchment? Might not that prove in the end to have been the best way? He was not thinking only of himself. Not for the first time did he fear a curse in the thing for his Lady of the Blue Eyes—blue eyes now so bright with anxiety.

But Lady Ballantyre was thinking of herself alone. Before her imagination galaxies of gems whirled like fireflies, and beyond them lay a dim vision of ease from worldly cares, safety from discovery. She drooped towards him, her eyes grown all at once piteous in their appeal. As one in pain she whispered:

"Luis, do not keep me in suspense!"

He turned to her . . . and nodded reassuringly.

"You can read it! You can tell what it is about!" All eagerness, Hector Maclean was leaning half-way across the table.

"One moment," answered Luis, done with hesitation. He looked at the parchment—and, in spite of himself, was thrilled. For the answer was there, and, so far, at least, as it concerned his fellow-conspirator, was a better answer than he could have expected. "Yes, I can read it, Mr. Maclean, and I can tell what it is about."

"The Spanish money—the *Florencia* treasure!"

"Not money, but still a treasure—gems, sapphires, rubies, emeralds and so forth, worth to-day, I believe, over a million pounds. Have patience!" Luis brought out an envelope and extracted a folded paper of heavy texture and glossy surface. "This is not the original," he said. "It is a photograph exactly the size of the original, and cut precisely to its shape."

Unfolding the paper, he spread it flat on the baize.

Maclean's voice came forth in a high falsetto. "What—what is that?"

"Be calm." Luis took the fragment and set its ragged edges against those of the photograph. "So—it fits!"

"By——!" muttered Maclean, and fell back in his chair.

"Read it, Luis," sighed Lady Ballantyre. "Translate——"

"Bear with me," said Luis. "I must first ask your cousin a few questions."

"Yes, yes!" Maclean sat up. "All the questions you like, Mr. Señor."

"Just a few. Lady Ballantyre has told me that your family has had its home on the present site for a very long time. Am I to assume that the Maclean so unfortunately slain by my ancestor's dagger had his home there?"

"Oh, yes—and many and many a Maclean before him!"

"Thank you! Now, have you any idea of what the home would be like in 1588?"

"I have heard tell that it was a sort of castle—not a great castle like Duart, or Aros, or—well, it would be just a sort of a kind of a castle. But I can tell you for sure that it was standing more forward than the house you were in to-day. Part of it would be standing over the place where the garden is now——"

"On the edge of that steep place, perhaps?"

"Just so! There are stones of it in the wall, yonder."

Luis nodded thoughtfully, and said:

"No doubt, quite a number of houses have followed on the site of the castle."

"Well, not so many as you might be thinking, Mr. Señor. Our houses stand a long time. I would say there was two, or maybe three, and then my father built the house you have been in—the old part of it, you understand. And I believe he built it a bit farther back than any of the others."

"I see." Luis was visualising the house and garden. After a pause—"One question more, Mr. Maclean. Am I correct in supposing that the well is situated behind the house?"

"The well?"

"The well that gives you your water supply. I imagine it is what is called a draw-well,—a well with a windlass and bucket, deep down in the rock."



Maclean looked amused. "That is a good one! You are thinking we are still very savage in Tobermory, Mr. Señor! God bless me, a well! I wonder what I would be doing with it, when I am getting all the water I need through a pipe, and you can have a hot bath any time you want it."

Luis had the look of a man come suddenly against a hidden barrier. "But—but you must have a well!" he said, staring at the parchment.

"No, no; it is not at all necessary, I assure you. I will not be denying that the

water we get from the hill is very brown, and strangers wonder at it; but it is clean, sweet water, and good for anything, except, maybe, for making leemonade and sodda water. Oh, a well would be a terrible nuisance, Mr. Señor. Fancy having to bring up every drop of water in a bucket, and carry it to the house!"

The expression of the younger man was that of discomfiture, and Lady Ballantyre anxiously begged him to explain.

"But there must be a well!" he repeated. "Come, Mr. Maclean, tell me this: Where did your people get their water before the days of pipes and reservoirs? Where did they get it in the days when the castle had to stand a siege, as I fancy it did, now and then?"

"Aha, but that will be another story!" brightly cried Maclean. "Now I will tell you a good one, Mr. Señor——"

Luis flung up his hand. "Tell me only where your people, in the days of the castle, got——"

"From the well, to be sure!"

"So there was a well?"

"Yes, yes—and there *is* a well, but no man will ever see it again."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it is under my house, and my father filled it up before he built the house. It is just under the hall you were in to-day."



"Unfolding the paper, he spread it flat on the baize. Maclean's voice came forth in a high falsetto. 'What—what is that?'"

Luis drew a long breath. "I thank you," he said, and smiled faintly to Lady Ballantyre. "Now we can go on." He turned back to the document. His fingers were not quite steady, but his voice was clear and level.

"I should tell you, Mr. Maclean," he began, "that I found the original of this photograph among my late father's papers, together with his remarks upon it. My father was of opinion that the writing was made in human blood with a stick of wood, after some previous writing had been removed, perhaps by rubbing with a stone. A number of the earlier characters which have survived would probably puzzle anyone but a student. Then bits are indecipherable: part of the date, for instance, and a portion of the word Tobermory, or Tibbermora, as it probably was spelled at that period; also"—a pause—"the greater part of a line which may have contained a description of the writer. Other words, or parts of words, are obliterated; but, thanks to your fragment, Mr. Maclean, we have all that really matters. Your fragment carries remains of the earlier writing, which are confusing, but it also carries the key words that make all the difference to us. Now I shall give you my father's translation, pausing at the blanks and omitting some broken words, and bringing in the vital words on your fragment, which in the original are——"

"Never mind the original," cried Lady Ballantyre. "Translate."

"This is the very devil!" muttered Maclean, wriggling. "Go on, go on, Mr. Señor!"

"Very well," said Luis, and began slowly to read:

> "'*In the year of our Lord*, 158–, *on the tenth . . . of the . . . month, I, Sebastiano . . . being warned in a dream of a great calamity to the ship, did myself convey secretly to the land the . . . casket of the precious . . . of the blessed Santa Barbara of . . . but being there in danger of my life, and fearing for . . . of the precious stones, I did secretly cast the . . . into the well at . . . of Hector . . . upon the hill called . . . above . . . Tobermory——*'"

"Hector," cried Lady Ballantyre, "please sit down!"

Maclean, who had risen at the mention of his name, laughed foolishly and obeyed.

"Is there more, Luis?"

"Just a few words

> "'*And now being sick and a . . . yet with a hope of sending this . . .*'

"There it breaks off. He was hoping, I imagine, to be able to send the writing to some of his own people, still in Scotland, perhaps in the neighbourhood. There is, I fear, more of his blood on the old parchment than went into the writing. It looks as though he had been murdered—suddenly—without warning—from behind—stabbed in the neck, or back. That would mean a rush of blood from——"

"Ugh!" exclaimed Lady Ballantyre. "How can you!"

"I am sorry," he returned remorsefully. "I am afraid I was painting a little picture for your cousin, whose ancestor, as well as mine——"

"Which of them would kill the poor sick wretch?"

Dimly smiling, Luis turned his eyes to Maclean. "I do not think," he said softly, "that you and I will quarrel over that point."

Maclean was not attending. At Lady Ballantyre's touch, he started.

"Hector, do you not understand what Señor de Lara has been telling us?"

He appeared to come to himself. "Yes, yes, I understand very well. But, Flora, I am thinking it is all damned nonsense." He turned to Luis. "Mind you, Mr. Señor, I am not saying it was all damned nonsense when the poor man wrote it; but he wrote it near three hundred and fifty years ago——"

"Allow me, please." Luis was now fairly into the fight, and in that hour, at any rate, he really desired to win. "Mr. Maclean, you believe with me that the casket was thrown into the well, but you are sceptical as to its being still there. Well, let me assure you that, from the day my ancestor came home to die, the parchment lay hidden—for he was afraid of it, though, probably, he hoped to use it later—till discovered by my father. It is recorded of my ancestor that he died of wounds received while fighting valiantly for his master, King Philip of Spain." Luis made a little grimace. "It is ill-work to deface the kindly epitaph on a man's tomb, and that man an ancestor; but my father, who preferred truth to most things, has noted his conviction that this Luis de Lara, having

had a greedy eye on the casket, followed its guardian ashore, with a view to obtaining it for himself. Personally, I should argue that, suspecting the guardian of being a thief, he followed to recover the casket for its rightful owners. That, unfortunately, seems to put your ancestor, Mr. Maclean, in a somewhat doubtful light!"

"Oh, I am not caring a straw about that! Still, I will point out to you that it is very likely that your ancestor killed the poor man in my ancestor's friendly house, and my poor ancestor, seeing him running off with the parchment, tried to stop him!"

Luis bowed. "That, too, is an excellent theory. But what do you say to splitting the difference and making it pleasant for us both? I beg to propose that the murder was committed by both our ancestors, who were in league, but afterwards quarrelled over the parchment. Can you agree?"

"With very great pleasure!" said Maclean. "Now we are on level ground."

Lady Ballantyre made a gesture of appeal. "Cannot you two cease trifling?"

"Not trifling, Lady Ballantyre," Luis answered. "We are burying the hatchet before the battle. Is it not so, Mr. Maclean?"

"Ha! I see what you mean," said Maclean, bristling slightly. "You are thinking I will be hard to come over—and you are right! But, all the same, I am waiting to hear more about the parchment. Who knows about it besides us three?"

"My father's secretary, now mine. He is deaf and dumb——"

"And you will not be telling him about this?" Maclean touched the fragment. "No, I think you will not!" In a leisurely manner he rubbed his eyes, which were, perhaps, growing heavy. "I see!" he murmured. "I see!"

"What do you see, Hector?" said Lady Ballantyre. "That the casket is still in your well?"

He shook his head. "It is a devil of a long time since 1588, or 1589."

"The casket, my father was assured, was made of lead," said Luis. "It would not go to pieces."

"Yes, but did you never hear of a well having to be cleaned?"

"Such gems as those—some with histories—could not have come back into the world without being noted and recognised."

"That may be very true, Mr. Señor. But supposing a rough ignorant Highlander was finding the casket down there, and then opening it, he would get such a terrible fright, he would be hiding it in another place and telling nobody. For what could a Mull man do in those days with a bonnetful of jewels?"

"He might hand them to his chief."

"Well, well, I wonder . . . I wonder!"

From Lady Ballantyre came a gasp of exasperation. "Hector, you are too canny for anything!"

"You are welcome to say it, Flora. But now tell me, how do you know that the jewels would be of so great value?"

"There is a record of them in certain Spanish archives," Luis patiently replied.

"I see! . . . Now, who was the poor man that our ancestors murdered?"

"I have told you that his description, as I suppose it to have been, is indecipherable."

"Yes, yes, and so you did, and I ask pardon for troubling you. . . . Now, who were the—the rightful owners in 1588?"

It was Lady Ballantyre who, noticing Luis's difficulty, replied: "Their names have not come down to us, Hector. Nor do we know why their treasure was on the *Florencia*. Whoever they were, they must have gone to their graves in the belief that their treasure went down with the ship."

"Are their names not in the Spanish ar—archeeves?"

"No." (Allow a woman to be positive when she knows nothing.)

"Still, Flora, surely those names, since they were of so wealthy men, could be found out."

"Possibly—with great trouble and expense."

"And the rightful owners would have descendants, just like our ancestors—would they not, Flora?"

"N—oh, well, I suppose so. But, as you sagely observed, Hector, a minute ago, it is a devil of a long time since 1588."

Maclean suppressed a chuckle at his cousin's remark, and moved his eyes to meet those of the younger man. "Still," he said very gently, "still, Mr. Señor, I must be telling you that I am an honest man."

Lady Ballantyre coloured, and Luis noticed it. A swift, small movement of his hand warned her to keep silent. His eyes did not waver from Maclean's, and just as gently he answered:

"That, Mr. Maclean, is where you and I differ."

"Well, I am damned!" cried Maclean, and burst out laughing.

Luis got up and put the plug in the electric kettle. "You shall have a cup of tea in no time," he said to his drooping hostess. "What can I give you, Mr. Maclean?"

"Oh, thank you, just a wee drop—and a wee, wee drop of sodda. Mr. Señor, I am wondering now if you are not the honester man of us two."

Gravely Luis shook his head. "Ah, no! If I come upon a million that somebody lost three hundred years ago, I say it is mine." He handed the tumbler to Maclean and helped himself to about a dessert-spoonful of cognac, took a sip in response to the others *slainte*, made a face and set down the glass.

"Flora," Maclean remarked, "you would be the better of a wee drop."

"Like myself," answered Luis, "Lady Ballantyre waits till the business is finished."

"The business?" The grizzled brows went up.

"Mr. Maclean," said Luis, returning to his seat, "you surely do not imagine that Lady Ballantyre and I would keep you from your home and bed merely to show you a photograph and tell you a story. Let me be quite frank. Lady Ballantyre, as you know, is not a grasping person, nor, as I hope you will believe, am I. But together we have been the means of placing within your reach a great fortune, and we feel we are justly entitled to a share. Do I make myself clear?"

"Very clear indeed; and I like a man who makes himself clear." Maclean took a drink. "I know nothing of your affairs, Mr. Señor, but I am sure my cousin is not needing any money——"

"Don't be such a goose, Hector!" Lady Ballantyre exclaimed. "All women need money—always! As for the Señor, he won't mind my telling you that his father died unexpectedly poor."

Maclean looked sympathetic. "Well, well, Flora, you know you can always be counting on me for a hundred pounds, or two; and Mr. Señor is a strong, clever young man, with all the world before him." He glanced very kindly at them both. "I am not a greedy person, myself, and if I was laying my hand on this treasure of precious stones—if they are there, and though I am still thinking they may be worth less than a pocketful of Iona pebbles—I would surely be offering you both a reward—maybe five per cent. between you, or, if the treasure was very great, two and a half. But you see"—he took another drink—"I am not going to lay my hand on the treasure—no, not if it is surely lying where you say it is."

It is probable that Lady Ballantyre would have given way had she not seen that Luis was smiling patiently.

"No, no," proceeded Maclean, "I will not be pulling up the good oak floor, and digging to God knows where, for the damned descendants of anybody!"

Mildly Luis spoke. "And do you tell us that you will go on spending your evenings in that pleasant hall of yours, playing billiards on that capital table, or resting and listening to Miss Maclean's playing on that delicious piano—and give never a thought to the treasure that lies not so very far beneath you? Do you tell us that, Mr. Maclean?"

"I am telling you what I am telling you!" was the reply, given with a touch of asperity. "I will, maybe, *think* a lot, but I will *do* nothing! And nobody can make me do anything!"

"Nobody?" said Luis, and got up. "But excuse me! The kettle boils. Allow me, Lady Ballantyre. In Spain, I always make tea for myself." Deftly he made the infusion, and then placed the tray conveniently for her hand. "There is no reason," he remarked, seating himself, "why we should not make an effort to find the heirs of the rightful owners."

"What?" shouted Maclean, sitting up.

"Oh, hush, Hector!" implored the hostess. "Anyone might hear you."

"I ask your pardon, Flora. But you are no cousin of mine, if you will allow such a thing. They would be coming to pull up the floor and, maybe, pull down the house——"

"All right, Mr. Maclean," said Luis. "Still, of course, they would compensate you and almost certainly give you a handsome reward of—shall we say?—two and a half—*h'm!*"

Again the old man stared, and again burst out laughing. "You are the very devil, Mr. Señor! But"—becoming sober—"I am an honest man, though I may be preferring to let sleeping dogs lie."

"Righto! So much for the damned descendants! Still, I dare say you can understand that your decision to do nothing is a blow to Lady Ballantyre and myself."

"I am sorry, very sorry, indeed; but I could not do it. And what would the people in Tobermory think, if I was pulling up the new floor? Besides, as I have told

my cousin, the house is not mine. It belongs to my daughter, Ailsa. She does not know yet, but the lawyer in Oban has the papers."

"A splendid gift, Mr. Maclean! Everything in the house, no doubt, is also your daughter's?"

"Everything—from the roof to the foundations."

"Would not that," asked Luis, with deliberation, "include the well?"

"Yes, yes, of course! And . . ." Maclean stopped short, his mouth open.

There was no triumph in the young man's smile. "When you declared that nobody could make you do it," he said kindly, "I could not help wondering if there was not one person who could."

"But—but—oh, man, you would not be telling Ailsa! Flora——"

Quickly Luis answered: "We should not dream of such a thing."

"For my daughter has all she needs. I tell you, she has all"—Maclean halted with a sigh.

"Anyone can see that, Mr. Maclean. And yet—though you should crave nothing for yourself—wonderful things can be done with a—with half a million pounds. You do not think of Miss Maclean's future as being spent in brilliant scenes, out in the great world, yonder; you would have her always near you, in this peaceful Tobermory—and who could blame you? Yet many a father with a daughter like yours would have high ambitions for her, and to such a father the windfall of a——"

Maclean's big brown hand made a queer little fluttering movement. "Please to excuse me," he said, "but I am feeling too tired for any more talk to-night." He rose heavily, neglecting the glass which he had not emptied. "Flora, will you order one of your men to put me on shore? It has been a wonderful evening—a wonderful evening in every way. I am sorry I cannot do what you want; but you may be sure, both of you, that nothing you have said will ever be repeated by me."

Lady Ballantyre, despair in her eyes, looked at Luis.

"You have not touched your tea," he said, and as he filled the cup he whispered, "Do not worry." He turned to hold the overcoat for the departing guest.

"You will be sailing in the morning, will you not, Flora?" said Maclean.

"I—I suppose so, Hector."

"Weather and other circumstances permitting!" Luis added gaily. "We trust you to warn us in the morning of—h'm—any approaching changes."

Maclean opened the door, stepped out on the landing, thence to the deck, and there surveyed the night. "There will be no change, Mr. Señor," he said, turning. "I am sure of it."

Luis bowed. "Perfect weather for a cruise. I hope you will not be too lonely without Miss Maclean."

"I will be missing Ailsa, but she must do what is pleasing to her. Flora, you need not be coming out, and with your bosom uncovered. I will say good——"

Lady Ballantyre laughed shortly. "You forget that it is my native air."

"And so it is, and the native air does not change, anyway."

The quartermaster and a sailor were standing by the gangway. Below the launch lay ready.

Stephen came along from the bridge.

"I shall go ashore with Mr. Maclean," he announced to his mother, and smiled wanly at the guest. "No one in Tobermory will see you at this hour, and I shan't sleep till I've had a walk." For an instant he hesitated. "Care to come, Señor?"

"Thanks; but I am thinking of turning in, and the walk would waken me up. Good night, Mr. Maclean. Sleep well!"

When the launch had slipped away, Luis took Lady Ballantyre's arm and led her into the lounge.

"Come and have a fresh cup, if it has not gone cold. I am going to have a bumper of —'sodda.'"

"Luis, why didn't you go with Stephen?"

"Stephen did not really want me. . . . Sit down." He was regarding her with concern. "This is not like you at all, Lady. Shall I give you a little brandy?"

"No. . . . Luis, why did you tell me not to worry? You know we are at the end of our wild-goose chase. It is all finished!"

"On the contrary, it is all beginning." He filled a fresh cup for her.

"I don't understand you. What have we to hope for now?"

"A change, Lady. Listen!" The syphon hissed. "'Sodda!' And that dear good man has gone home to a restless night. He will lie awake, thinking of the treasure and his daughter, of his daughter and the treasure. And by morning—well, there will be a change. He will be planning to take up his oaken floor!"

"Even so, you have no bargain with him.

Oh, I knew Hector would be difficult, but never dreamed he could be so—so mean!"

"Not mean, Lady. He wants nothing for himself."

"Well, he is rapacious for Ailsa."

"As I," said Luis lightly, "am rapacious for you. Let him put his hand on the casket, and we shall make our bargain."

"You don't know Hector! We can do nothing to force him—nothing!"

"I am not thinking of force. One does not put force on wax."

"Are you speaking of Hector? Wax!"

"In the hands of his daughter—yes! You can trust Miss Ailsa to make him do the fair thing."

Lady Ballantyre frowned. "Oh, I see! But we have given our words not to tell Ailsa."

"Her father will have to tell her—everything. She is the sort of girl who will insist on knowing everything. And then she will insist that you—you who have made it all possible—receive half of the fortune."

"Luis, do you really believe what you are saying?"

"Every word, Lady."

There was a pause till she said half to herself: "Yes, I can almost believe that Ailsa would be generous, and—and——"

"'Just' is the other word, I think."

Lady Ballantyre looked up. "It would seem," she remarked a little dryly, "that in so short a time the friendship has developed rather marvellously."

Luis smiled. "I have been paying strict attention to my instructions." He took a sip of soda, and held the glass up to the light. "Sparkling depression! I shall never see a syphon without thinking of to-night!" He set down the glass and dropped wearily into a chair.

"Won't you take something stronger? You must need it," she said kindly. "Why, Luis, you're white!"

"Am I? But a glass of wine would send me silly. I might say things to you——" He drew his hand across his eyes. "Oh, Lady, Lady, was it not all perfectly horrible?"

"Poor Luis! It must have been an awful strain, and I was no help. I let myself get too anxious. My nerve gave towards the end."

"Little wonder! Did not you think I was beastly?"

"Don't vilify yourself! You were not fighting for your own hand alone."

"But did not you detest me at times?"

"Nonsense!"

"Dislike me, then?"

"You are a queer man," she said gently. "And in your talk with Hector you sometimes appeared to me as a stranger. I will admit that I did not like you when you became—what is the word?—ah, yes—suave."

"You have said it! That was when I most despised myself."

There was a brief silence.

"When, may I ask," she inquired, with an attempt at levity, "do you like yourself best?"

"That is too general a question, Lady! But I can tell you this: I have never liked myself better than I did this afternoon, and this evening up till ten o'clock."

"You mean with Ailsa?"

"Yes. It is so difficult to be dishonest with that girl."

"Really! Are you going to fall in love with Ailsa?"

"I have already fallen."

"Are you jesting now?"

"Are you displeased?"

She thought for a moment. "It is, of course, early to ask if you are contemplating marriage."

"Not a bit early! I am not contemplating marriage."

"Then . . ." She thought again. "Luis, because you know what I desire for Stephen, you must not imagine I have no regard, no affection, for Ailsa. I cannot have you trifle with her."

"I shall not trifle with her."

"Then why not marriage—if you can win her? Your different religions might make a difficulty——"

"An insuperable difficulty."

"Why? Because you are a good Catholic?"

"Because I am not that."

"Oh, you are dreadfully down on yourself to-night! I wish you would take a little drink."

"I have talked enough without a drink. But be assured that I am not trifling with Miss Ailsa; that I am, in fact, merely obeying your wishes—with pleasure, of course! May I smoke a cigarette?"

"I ought to have thought of that! But I do not wish you to suffer, and I do not wish Ailsa to suffer."

"She is suffering now—from the delusion of being in love with Steve."

"Delusion! You think——?"

"And so," said Luis, getting up, "there is nothing left to worry about. But you must go to bed now, for it is on the cards that we shall have a busy morning. Come!" He held out his hand. "I am going to see you to your room."

"You ask that because you are tired. Leave all to the morning."

"But your answer?"

"I am tired, too. I will answer your question in a week or so, or time will answer it for me. Come, let us go."



"Unsteadily he said, 'And it is a thousand years since I kissed your lips'—and laid his hands on her shoulders."

She took his hand, but sat still. There was pathos, as well as weariness, in the blue eyes raised to his; pathos, also, in the question: "Luis, am I making an awful mess of everything?"

She rose, and in silence they went down the staircase. In the doorway of her room she said, with a frail smile:

"Since the War, when you came home on leave, a young gallant, you have not

kissed my hand, and I—I am beginning to feel a lonely old woman."

"Have I not, Lady?" From her pretty ankles, past her clasped jewelled fingers, her woman's breast and lovely neck, his gaze travelled up to her face.

Yes, perhaps she was looking a little older. Her eyes were unchanged, but there were lines. . . . Yet what did they matter? What would it matter if she turned grey before his sight? And she had tried him a thought too far. Unsteadily he said, "And it is a thousand years since I kissed your lips"—and laid his hands on her shoulders.

Lady Ballantyre stood quite still. She seemed scarcely to breathe.

"Dear!" he muttered, set his mouth to hers, sighed, and went his way.

For a little while she stood there, and then her breast heaved. Quietly she shut the door and sat down on the narrow sofa, and put her hands to her face.

A further instalment of "Gambler's Hope" will appear in our next issue.

BUTTERCUPS.

A GENTLEMAN with buttercups
Was shouting in the Strand;
He cried, "Come, buy my buttercups!"
And held out in his hand
A lovely mass of frosted gold,
Like sunlight on a day that's cold.

He said, "They're open as the skies
And bright as any maidie's eyes,
And sweeter than the hedgerow smells,
And gayer than a peal o' bells;"
He said, "A sixpence you will spend,
Good people, to no better end."

I bought a load of buttercups,
Oh, what a lovely fuss!
I was so rich in buttercups
I leapt upon a 'bus;
And all the people sent their eyes
To steal some gladness from my prize.

I said, "They're warmer than the sun,
So gold and blazing every one;"
I said, "They're richer than a fee
Of golden sovereigns would be;"
I said, "They're all the country charms,
Three fairy wishes in my arms;"
I said, "They're dreams from country beds;"
And all the good folks nodded heads.

AGNES GROZIER HERBERTSON.

THE CUB

By W. GILHESPY

ILLUSTRATED BY DUDLEY TENNANT

HIRAM P. CALTHORPE rapped out an order as he bent over a basket in which two baby bears slept.

"Fetch some milk for these b'ars," he shouted, "and look sharp. See?"

Then he strolled round his travelling cages and inspected the wild animals he was about to send to Bombay, *en route* to America.

"One more trip and I quit," he mused, as he lit his cheroot. He had been saying the same thing for ten years, but each trip to the coast had been followed by another. He had been catching or buying wild beasts, birds, reptiles, heads, skins and rare eggs in the East and West Indies, South America, Africa, and the islands of the Malaya Archipelago for twenty years. There was money in the business, and Hiram P. Calthorpe loved money.

A coolie returned with milk as though his life depended on his speed. His master called Jaffer, his head man, to help him feed the bears, two tiny cubs with beady black eyes. The task was one that called for skill and infinite patience. Calthorpe possessed both.

"Reckon we can rear them cubs?" he asked. "Seems to me they're mighty small."

"The lives of even the jungle beasts are in the hands of Allah," Jaffer replied. "Through His mercy and my careful treatment they will survive. I paid only three rupees for them; the low-caste wretch who brought them demanded seven—till I beat him with my shoe."

One cub refused to eat or drink, scratched and bit when eggs and milk were poured down his throat, and died. Calthorpe decided to rear the other himself.

"You go and buy a goat," he ordered. "Get one with a very young kid."

The goat considered that suckling a bear cub was beneath her dignity, but the American thought otherwise—so did the cub. With a regular supply of warm milk and scraps from her master's table, the little one thrived and her owner was satisfied. In due time she would be sold, and every dollar he got for her would go to swell his banking account.

A wealthy client in New York had asked to be supplied with a female cub of the Indian black bear for his private menagerie, stipulating that she should be tame. This was the third specimen that Calthorpe had bought. One had contracted mange and was shot, another shared the same fate after being bitten by a mad jackal. So the little stranger received rather more attention than her own mother would have deemed necessary.

Calthorpe, lolling in a deck-chair under the shade of a tree, directing his assistants and watching the cub that played at his feet, knew that he had still a great deal to learn about bears. She aroused his interest as no other animal had ever done, and he studied her intently, bringing his quick intelligence to the formidable task of deciding where instinct gave place to higher mental activities. Could a bear think? Day after day he puzzled over the problem, and had to acknowledge defeat, tried to put the subject from his mind and failed.

There were times when he was sure that instinct alone, the inherited experience of countless generations of bears, guided this mite. Then the cub, studying some object that was strange to her, would examine it from every angle and look up to him with the air of a puzzled child. Occasionally she would find some ludicrous use for it, and her master would be convinced that she was moved by a sense of humour. At other times she would tear and maul it in a sudden gust of babyish temper, or hide it and forget its existence. Often her bewilderment seemed almost distressing, and she would drag the object of her scrutiny to her master with an unmistakable demand for assistance. Calthorpe would be quite satisfied that she possessed reasoning powers. If, an hour later, he tried to reawaken her interest in the subject and could not arouse the slightest

response, he would sigh and again admit defeat.

She reminded him of a puppy he had owned when a boy. Sally had had just such impish black eyes, just the same love of mischief, so he named the cub after her. When she wandered off to the jungle he led a search-party and returned dead weary, but with the cub before him on the saddle. Not until she had been well fed and curled herself up at his feet did he begin to realise all she had come to mean to a lonely man who had never before known that he really *was* lonely.

He had captured, or he had bought and sold, animals just as other merchants bought and sold sacks of grain or bales of hides. Big or little, gentle or ferocious, they had been just articles of barter—nothing more. He treated them kindly because that was "good business," and he would give any of his servants a trouncing for neglecting or harshly treating them. If a beast proved intractable, or was so ill that its recovery could only be assured by long-continued treatment, he would shoot it without even a thought for the beautiful form he condemned to corruption. He called it "cutting his losses." That also was "good business."

Sally got more personal care than all the other animals together. No dog that ever won championships on the show bench got more kindly attention than the cub that had cost him about half a dollar.

She was nearly eight months old when her master's next consignment was ready for shipment.

"Guess I'll miss you when you're sold, little bear," he said with a laugh, as though trying to show himself that the idea of missing a mere wild beast was rather amusing. Neither the laugh nor the attempt was very convincing.

But Sally was never sold, for Fate can play strange tricks with beasts, just as she does with men. One of the scavengers, cleaning and disinfecting a cage in preparation for the long journey, upset a bucket of scalding water. Sally, examining the scrubbing brushes and drum of disinfectants, was severely scalded down one flank and shoulder. With a howl of rage and pain she fled to the jungle, rolling over and over among the dead leaves in her agony, cuffing and biting the natives who tried to catch her.

Calthorpe, fixing a stronger fastening to the monkeys' cage, dropped everything and ran to her, seizing a blanket from his bed and flinging it over her head. With her jaws and chisel-like claws firmly secured, he applied first-aid, then set out to chastise the careless native with a whip. But the scavenger was flying along a jungle path, wisely intent on putting a few miles between himself and his irate master.

Sally quietened down under her master's hand, but only by the skill born of long practice was he able to save her. Sale was now out of the question, for her right shoulder showed a great patch of puckered skin instead of being covered with glossy black hair.

"Who'd buy you now?" he demanded as he stooped over her, and there was a gentle cadence in his deep voice that his subordinates had never heard. "Yer sure not worth an inch of chewing plug—with only half yer hide left." Sally, gingerly taking pieces of biscuit from her master's fingers, seemed quite content. Calthorpe shifted the awning that shielded her from the sun and left her to rest.

"Wonder what she's cost me—fust and last?" he mused. "And a bad bargain, after all." Yet, as he lit a fresh cheroot, his bad bargain did not seem to distress him overmuch. For Sally had brought a new interest into his life, the first that was not purely mercenary since the pursuit of wealth had enchained him. Childless, friendless, the fire and ardour of youth his no longer, wealth itself had little charm for him; its acquisition ofttimes wearied him. Still, the lure of accumulation gripped him, like some evil habit that he could not shake off. Now a badly disfigured she-bear gave him more real pleasure than the hoard of dollars and securities that lay in a New York bank.

For two years she was his companion; slowly but surely her companionship wrought a change in him. Trifles ceased to irritate him as they had once done, he was less overbearing with those who served him. These were quick to see the change and note its cause.

So it was that, when Sally wandered away to the jungle and was absent for a fortnight, there was consternation in the camp. Calthorpe was in Bombay, where, after sending off his captives, he had remained to superintend the making of fresh cages. Jaffer, with blows and curses, drove the other assistants to the jungle to search for the truant—in vain. When she returned after a fortnight's absence, he almost wept, so great was his relief.

"By the mercy of Allah a great evil hath

been averted," he declaimed, " greater than such as ye can comprehend. Now hearken unto me."

He puffed solemnly at the big water-pipe before handing it to Moola Bux, the tracker, and harangued the underlings.

" All white men are mad," he declared. " Else why should they spend on the unclean beasts of the jungle the wealth that would obtain for them many wives and much rich

return by following him wherever he went, as though afraid that he would again desert her. For weeks she would never let him leave her sight, then her demeanour changed. She grew lazy and surly, was restless and capricious, often growling at any native who approached her. Sometimes she would sulk in a dark corner, then she disappeared and returned no more.

For a few days Calthorpe was uneasy, but



" Slowly but surely her companionship wrought a change in him."

food ? Verily they are mad, but, if such madness leads our sahib to talk to a bear as a foolish woman talks to a child, what is it to us ? If he be less quick to wrath by reason of this strange folly, let us, who eat his salt, give praise to Allah for the danger that has passed us by. Therefore curb ye your idle tongues, lest he learn of this beast's wanderings and be roused to anger. I have spoken."

Sally showed her delight at her master's

not alarmed. Then he sent out search-parties and himself combed the forest, taking with him Moola Bux, the *puggee* (tracker).

His men, instead of making fresh captures, now spent their time in looking for a bear with a hide so badly scarred that she was unsaleable. The search continued for three weeks; then the American called his men back and bade them return to their ordinary duties.

"To him who can lead me to where that brute hides I will give a reward of twenty rupees," he promised. A week later he raised the offer to fifty, and carried a repeating rifle wherever he went. Then the *puggee* brought him welcome news.

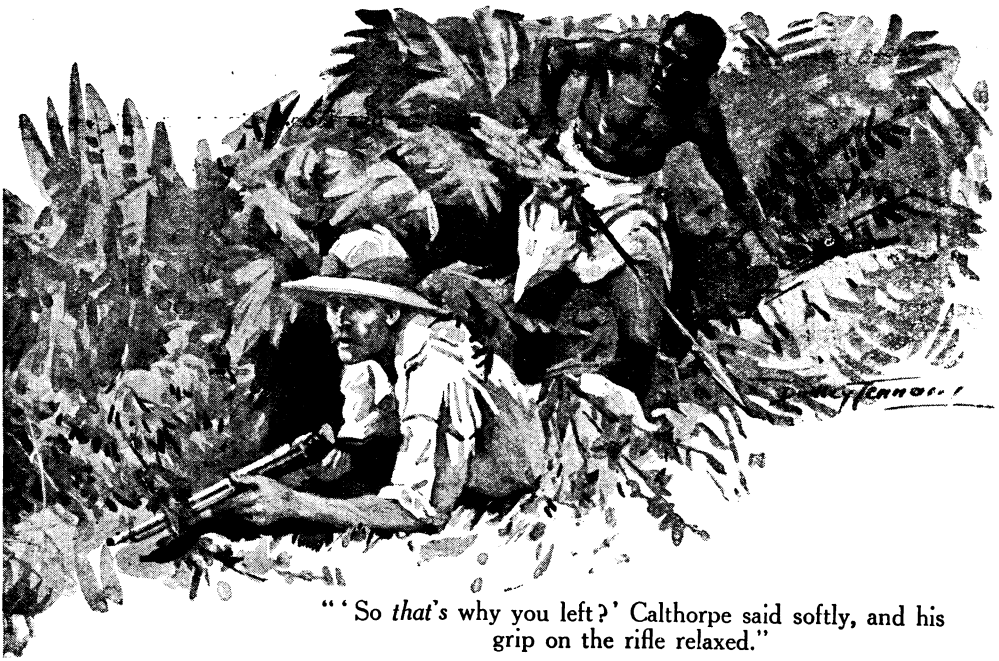
"I have seen the wanderer," he declared, "and her tracks show that she hides among rocks that only a goat or a bear could climb,



also they lead down to the stream. There are many tracks there, which show that she drinks at that spot each evening; also another bear is with her, for the tracks intermingle." Calthorpe roared an order for his horse to be saddled and slipped some cartridges in his pocket.

"You take me to where I can get one clean shot and you handle ten dollars—*pronto*," he rapped out.

Long before twilight fell he lay hidden at the spot which Moola Bux had indicated, just opposite the usual drinking-place. It was almost dark when the *puggee* hissed a warning, and his master cuddled his rifle closer to cheek and shoulder. He could



"'So *that's* why you left?' Calthorpe said softly, and his grip on the rifle relaxed."

neither hear nor see any movement among the bushes, but the native's keen vision had shown him that something was stirring among the undergrowth. Calthorpe covered a grey rock with the bead of his rifle and waited. When a dark form hid it from his sight he pressed the trigger.

"Got yer," he exulted, and rushed across the stream as something churned the water into foam in its death struggles. He clubbed the dying bear with the rifle, hideous glee making his voice almost incoherent as he struck and struck again till the stock of the rifle snapped.

"This," said Moola Bux, when he had lit his lantern," is Sallee's companion. She became afraid and ran back when the sahib fired. Never will she drink here again." Calthorpe, weak from the reaction which followed his insane passion and bitter disappointment, leaned against a rock and cursed bitterly.

He returned to his tent and, contrary to his custom, drank heavily. He awoke late next morning, sent for Moola Bux and handed him fifty rupees.

"Another fifty when I shoot that Sally—wait—I'll make it a hundred, but cutting one rupee for every day she lives. Scoot; the sooner you get me to where I can drop her the less you lose. Savvy?"

"*Hookum hai* (it is an order)," the *puggee* answered, and set out.

He returned three days later to say that Sally was surely living among the rocks.

"But," he added, "she never comes near the stream. I cannot find her cave, for no man can climb such rocks without others to help him with ropes; then would she hide till darkness enabled her to escape. Her tracks? Of a truth there are many, but she leaves not her den until darkness falls and is too clever to return by the same way. Great wisdom hath Allah given unto her."

"Guess he's telling the truth," Calthorpe thought as the native took the trail again. "He won't lose good money if *he* can help it."

Inactivity wearied him, his baffled desire to take vengeance on the deserter for her ingratitude galled him till he could not rest. He sent for Moola Bux, who had still the same story to tell.

"Then if she's too cute to follow the same track in and out I might as well just hunt round and take chances," Calthorpe decided. "Show me where you struck her trail last."

Night after night he lay motionless near where she might be expected to pass. The prowlers of the night slunk by and, though he was well acquainted with their appearance and habits, he could seldom name them, so silently and swiftly did they pass in the gloom. Once a small herd of elephants passed in single file, their huge forms showing black against the sky. Once a rhino-

ceros winded him, lost the scent and sniffed round, trying to recover it. It stood motionless to windward of him for an hour, and Calthorpe knew that if he only moved or sneezed the savage brute would turn in his direction. Then some sound in the jungle lured it away, and he breathed his relief.

Still he watched and waited, night after night. Insufficient rest and food told their tale on a man no longer young, the night dews drenched him, mosquitoes feasted on him, and when Moola Bux returned in triumph, he was slowly recovering from a severe attack of malaria.

"She is found," the tracker announced; "she feasts in the evening on a patch of berries within easy shooting distance of a hiding-place which Allah created specially for the sahib. I have seen her." Calthorpe tried to cross the tent, but clutched the back of a chair for support.

"Guess I've got to wait a few days," his master said feebly. It was a week before he was able to put his foot in the stirrup, and during that week he made Moola Bux describe the place again and again.

"Keep away from her," he ordered. "If she winds you or sniffs your tracks we may lose her. Keep away."

"We will go to-morrow evening," he announced later.

"If the Protector of the Poor will wait till he is stronger," the *puggee* demurred.

"The Protector of the Poor is strong enough to climb over the gates of hell for the sake of a shot," his master snapped. "We go to-morrow evening—early."

They left the pony tethered a mile from the spot selected for the slaughter, for the clatter of iron-shod hooves on the rock would have been fatal to the success of their enterprise. Slowly, wearily, pausing often to rest, Calthorpe climbed the slope in his rope-soled boots. For the first time in his life he allowed a native to carry his beloved rifle, yet he was exhausted and feverish when he sank down at the summit of the hill. Cautious sips from his flask and a copious draught from the water-bottle helped him to recover, but Moola Bux was sad.

"Who can shoot straight when his hand shakes with the fever?" he asked himself. "Once more she will escape—taking my rupees with her."

For an hour his master waited, then he saw the long grass wave and knew that the time had come. He took a bigger drink of whisky to steady his trembling hands and laid his cheek to the butt of the rifle as the bear came out in the open, looking back along the way she had come and giving the watcher a clear view of her scarred shoulder.

"Sally," he gloated in savage glee, "you've lived too long—too long, my gal. You've got one more minute, and then, Sally—then you'll hear this hyar rifle speak and you'll feel——"

He paused, puzzled by Sally's behaviour. She sat down on her haunches and looked back along the path she had travelled. Timidly, hesitatingly, a tiny cub approached her, stopped and turned back. Two strides took the young mother past it and she gently nosed it towards the berry patch, while another cub, dismayed at being left alone, emerged from the tall grass and hurried after.

"So *that's* why you left?" Calthorpe said softly, and his grip on the rifle relaxed. "Guess this is them there babies' fust trip abroad, Sally. Reckon I may's well say 'Good-bye'—Sally."

He lingered over her name as though he loved it, uttered it as though it were a benediction.

It was—a benediction that fell on him who breathed it. He walked wearily down the long hill, but with the serenity which follows one who has passed from turmoil into peace.

LAMB-LORE.

SHALL we grow weary of the Spring
As these wise people seem,
Who talk so much on everything
And have no time for wondering,
And little mind to dream?

Shall we grow weary? Foolish one,
Look where the new lambs play.
Though we grow old beneath the sun,
Still shall there be while years are spun,
Lambs on a glad May day.

W. LESLIE NICHOLLS.



THE BORN SALESMAN.

"I want something by Edgar Wallace."
"Yes, mum. Happy or sticky ending?"

THE EDITOR'S SCRAP-BOOK

THE SURPRISES.
By B. E. Todd.

"I've quite decided," remarked Bruce plaintively, "I've quite decided that I don't particularly care for Spring. It doesn't mean daisies and buttercups and love to me: it means chair castors and broken Ingersoll watches and old razor-blades."

"It's all your fault," said Laura. Her voice was thick with dust. She sat on the study floor and looked wearily at a broken picture-frame, a lensless camera, bundles of curtain-rings, two large bound store catalogues and several tin boxes. "You suggested a clean sweep——"

"I never even dreamed of such a person."

"Oh, don't try to be funny *now*. You know what I mean. You said that we had better turn the study into a dumping-ground for all the things that we generally hustle back into drawers and places."

It should not be necessary to describe the scene. You, too, have doubtless indulged in spring-cleaning and know the look of the things that "may come in useful some day." The Mackenzies had been busy for some time, so naturally their tempers were frayed.

"What," continued Bruce, "what am I to do with a wallet of blunt carving tools? I don't carve and you don't carve and we don't know anyone else who carves. And now I've gone and found a nest of rawl-plugs and an old soldering-iron."

"Bury them," said Laura faintly.

"Tinker would only dig 'em up again."

"Give them to a tramp, then. Throw them at the next caller. Only don't worry me. I've just found a grey velvet belt with an enamel buckle—quite nice, but no use. I wish a rag-and-bone man would come along."

"Except that the only things we *haven't* hoarded are rags and bones. Let's give a party and have a treasure-hunt. I'm sure the Vicar would like this fossil." Bruce held up a thing that looked like petrified tripe.

"Don't be a fool. I've found a box full of solitaire marbles." There was a sound of rattling as Laura crawled backwards from an open cupboard. "And here's most of a jig-saw puzzle. It's these unburnable things that are so frightful. People in towns have dust-bins."

From a laburnum tree outside the window a mad thrush sang, "Cathedral, Cathedral, Cathedral," over and over again.

"I think the bird is suggesting prayer," said

Bruce shakily. "We've reached a crisis. It's the difficult tenth year of married life that the novelists write about!"

Laura's lips began to quiver. She looked like April herself, in her daisy patterned overall, as she spilled pawns from a broken-hinged chess box.

"Tears and dust when mingled make mud," warned Bruce. "If seven maids with seven brooms——"

"No, they couldn't," interrupted Laura. "And we've only one and she's broken the vacuum cleaner."

"To think," declared Bruce dramatically, "to think that this same tragedy is being enacted in a thousand little homes. The world is full of men who have lockless keys and broken watches in the small left-hand drawers of their dressing-tables. The world is full of women who don't know what to do with enamel buckles. There's the telephone. Ring out, wild bell!"

"Fool!" said Laura again as she snatched up the receiver.

Then she answered, "Yes, yes, it is. Oh! Yes, we have. Rather! When? This afternoon? That'll be splendid. We'll send them at once. It's no trouble. Good-bye!"

"Well?" inquired Bruce, looking up gloomily from an old bicycle bell.

Laura danced between the pawns and the puzzle. "We're saved!" she cried. "There's a jumble sale at the Vicarage this afternoon. Send Hobson round with the wheelbarrow, darling, and we'll get rid of all this rubbish!"

Later that day, as the Mackenzies ate hot buttered toast in their nice tidy study, they heard the sound of footsteps scrunching on the drive outside and their daughter's voice raised in jubilation.

Then the door opened, and in came Helen, their eldest born. Her face was beaming with love and generosity. The skirt of her holland overall was held up to make a gigantic pocket.

"Surprises!" she announced.

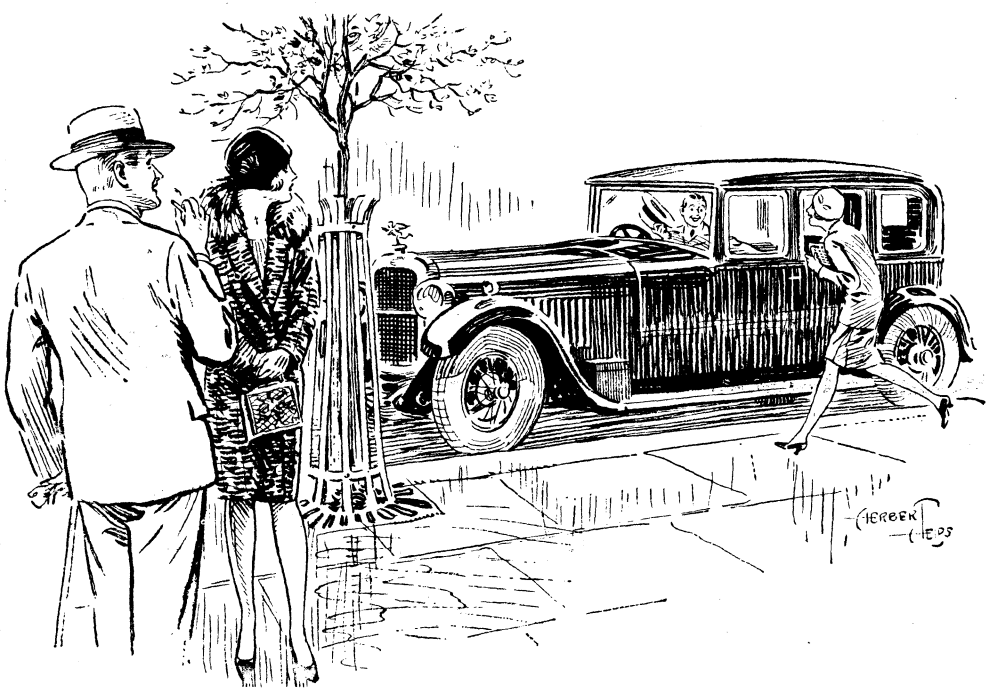
"How lovely," said Laura. "What can it be?"

"I've been to the jumble sale all by myself," said Helen proudly. "I spent a shilling at Mrs. Higgin's stall, and I bought——" Here she let fall the ends of her overall. Down rattled a box of beads, a broken watch, a wallet of carving tools, an old bicycle bell, a soldering-iron and a grey velvet belt.

"All for you," said Helen, as she shook dust from her overall. "*Isn't* it a surprise?"

"It certainly is, darling," said Laura a little shakily.

"There are some more in the porch," said Helen.



A MATTER OF ENVIRONMENT.

HE: How she runs after that ass George! Whatever does she see in him?
SHE: Nothing! It's what she sees him *in*!



THE GREAT—AND THE MORE GREAT!

TO MY MOWER.

By Lambert Jeffries.

AND so, old enemy, we meet again

Ho, ho! Obstinate already, are you? So you want to sleep on a little longer? Well, we shall see who's the stronger.

Oh, you won't, won't you? We'll see about that. Just wait a minute till I've removed a dozen flower-pots, a rake, a spade, two forks, an old bath, a deck-chair, a dustbin lid, some miscellaneous poles and sticks, and a dirty piece of sacking. Now then . . .

What, still obstinate? Dash it all, what's the matter with you? Got cramp in the joints, I suppose. But you're coming out *now*.

Oh yes, you are. I've taken my coat off to you now, you'll notice. You're coming out of that shed! See? It's no good trying to shirk. Heaps of people are waiting eagerly to hear our celebrated imitation of an antiquated traction-engine descending a bumpy declivity at sixty miles an hour.

Oh, very well. We'll see what a little oil and adjusting can do.

Ah! That's better. You moved. Nearly an inch, I swear—unless it was that rickety knife of yours that deceived me. Anyhow, a little more oil—a little more hammering. . . .

Aha! Now we're off!

Patience and persistence can accomplish wonders. We have actually travelled all the way up the lawn—thanks to my going before with a pair of shears and lifting you over the nasty bits. Still, we're getting on. By the time the season is in full swing we may be able to do the whole lawn in a single pushing.

Not, of course, that we shall ever *mow* it. That, as you and I both know, is only what we pretend to the neighbours. Fate, I think, intended you to function as a plough; indeed, already we have reduced the Alps under the apple tree a little nearer to sea-level. Eventually, I venture to hope, we shall have the lawn looking less like a jungle and more like a man whose head has gone bald in patches.

And that, I suppose, is all that can be expected of you. For you are—are you not?—a wretched, contemptible blunder on the part of some misguided mechanical engineer.

Indeed, for two pins I'd return you to your owner next door and buy a mower of my own.



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THE LISTENING FACE.

By L. Mayne.

SOMETHING will have to be done. This morning a rag-and-bone man followed me all down Main Street—I *did* give him an old suit five years ago, but I don't think his gratitude need have lasted till now, and I really wasn't interested in his life since then. I had to dive into a shop to get rid of him, and he said he would wait outside. I bought a pair of silk stockings I didn't want, a yard of ribbon, and sundries from six other counters, before I dare come out again.

John says it is my face. It *looks* all right, but John says I am no judge. It certainly has this peculiarity—those who meet it immediately want to talk volubly about themselves.

Last General Election, a friend of mine wanted to get into Parliament, as he was out of work and wanted to get married, so I promised to canvass for him.

I called next morning at No. 1 Peck Street, and saw a broad woman through a cloud of steam. "Come in, my dear," she said, "I can't hear what you says with them carts passing"—but she didn't want to hear what I said—no one ever does. She told me all about her inside, and her husband's, and her uncle's interior regions, and then she told me secrets about her ancestors' anatomy.

After two hours I got a word in, while she was undoing a knot in the clothes-line with her teeth. I said "I called to ask you——"

"There," she said, "I knew that front tooth wasn't safe," and for another hour she talked about her teeth, and the baby's, who died of teething.

I went without asking her political opinions, and marked her "doubtful," and John said it was *my* fault the dinner was spoilt.

I spent the afternoon at No. 2, who told me how the country ought to be governed, and invited me to tea. I marked *her* doubtful.

I canvassed ten houses in the fortnight; I really don't think Robert need have blamed me when he had to take a post as salesman at £300 a year; he seemed to think I had robbed him of the other hundred.



TIME!

FATHER: I can't have you standing in the porch with that young man of yours.
DAUGHTER: But I only stayed for a second.
FATHER: Nonsense! I distinctly heard the third, fourth, and fifth.

I was watching a big fire the other day, wedged in a crowd, with the back-wash of the hose-pipes playing about my best shoes; but what really spoilt my pleasure was a queer-looking man who was leaning against my left shoulder; a sudden burst of flame lit up my face, and as usual, one look set him talking.

"Ooh—that was a good un—isn't it a grand fire?—them's the people who ought to have fires—them rich uns"; then, thrusting his face into mine, "they don't know I'm here—I have fits—I don't do any work, I don't—if I gets excited, I screams, and kicks, and foams—they don't let me come out by myself." He began to get excited, but at that moment the police thrust me, and the crowd, back; he stood his ground, and in the lurid light I saw him eagerly scanning the crowd for my face.

I went into a shop yesterday for some mint. "We haven't any," said the shopman, looking heart-broken. "Come to my garden, love, and *I'll* give you some," said a woman, looking at my face, with suppressed eagerness; "it's only a step." I accepted the offer, and she gathered the mint, and had not spoken a word; then it came out. "We've got a lodger. 'E's a corpse. 'E looks grand. I'll take you to see 'im"—appealingly. "We're burying 'im to-morrow."

I pleaded an early dinner, and left hurriedly. "It wouldn't take a minute," she said reproachfully. I heard her voice calling after me in triumph, "We're 'aving 'am for the funeral!"

"You shouldn't talk to these people," said John.

"Talk to them," I said indignantly, "why, I never get a word in. You don't suppose"—but John wasn't listening to me—no one ever does.

LADY VISITOR: Is that bull dangerous?

FARMER: Oh no, mum, he's one of the sort they use for making beef-tea.



EASILY SATISFIED.

FARM FOREMAN: Well, I dunno about findin' a job for 'ee, Willum—ther' ain't a lot o' work about.

WILLUM (born tired): I—I don't want much!

HUSBAND: I see there was an exhibit at the Chemists' Exhibition called Tetraiodphenolphthalein.

WIFE: Hush, George. Not before the children!

VISITOR: It must be very dull here except in summer. How do you amuse yourself?

NATIVE: Well, mum, I pretend I'm a visitor and keep asking myself questions.

TESSIE: I've figured out how to be happy.

BESSIE: What's his name, dearie?



THE BISHOP: Well, my little man, what was it you wanted to ask me?
THE BOY: Can you put your toe in your mouth?



VISITOR (who has just given sonny boy a penny): Take care of the pennies—the shillings will take care of themselves.
SONNY BOY: They don't—as soon as I've saved a shilling, father takes care of it!

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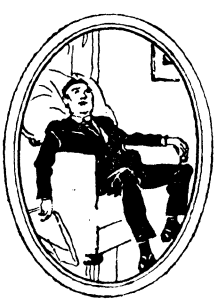
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and I state most emphatically that there are thousands of men earning less than half of what they could earn simply because they do not know where the demand exceeds the supply. Thousands of people think they are in a rut simply because they cannot see the way to progress. This applies particularly to Clerks, Book-keepers, Engineers, Electricians, Builders, Joiners, etc. They do not realise that in these particular departments the demand for the well trained exceeds the supply. In Technical trades and in the professions employers are frequently asking us if we can put them in touch with well-trained men. Of course, we never act as an employment agency, but it shows us where the shortage is. In nearly every trade or profession there is some qualifying examination, some hall-mark of efficiency. If you have any desire to make progress, to make a success of your career, my advice is free; simply tell me your age, your employment and what you are interested in, and I will advise you free of charge. If you do not wish to take that advice, you are under no obligation whatever. We teach all the professions and trades by post in all parts of the World, and specialise in preparation for the examinations. Our fees are payable monthly. Write to me privately at this address, The Bennett College, Dept. 25, Sheffield.

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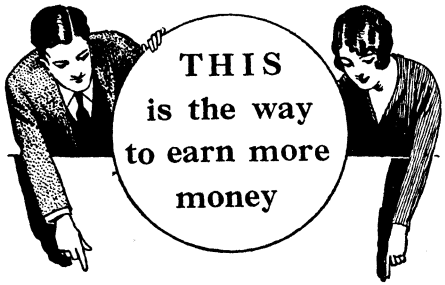
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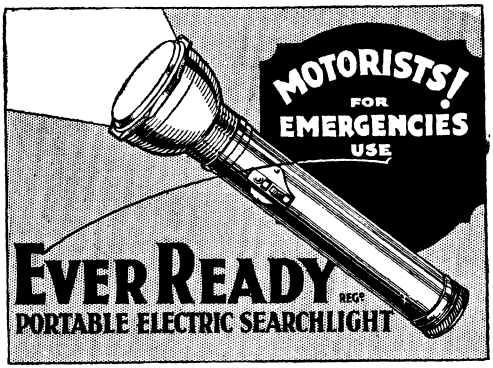
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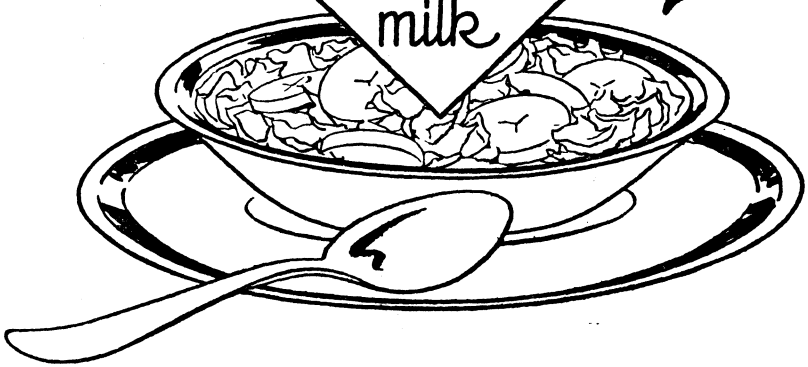
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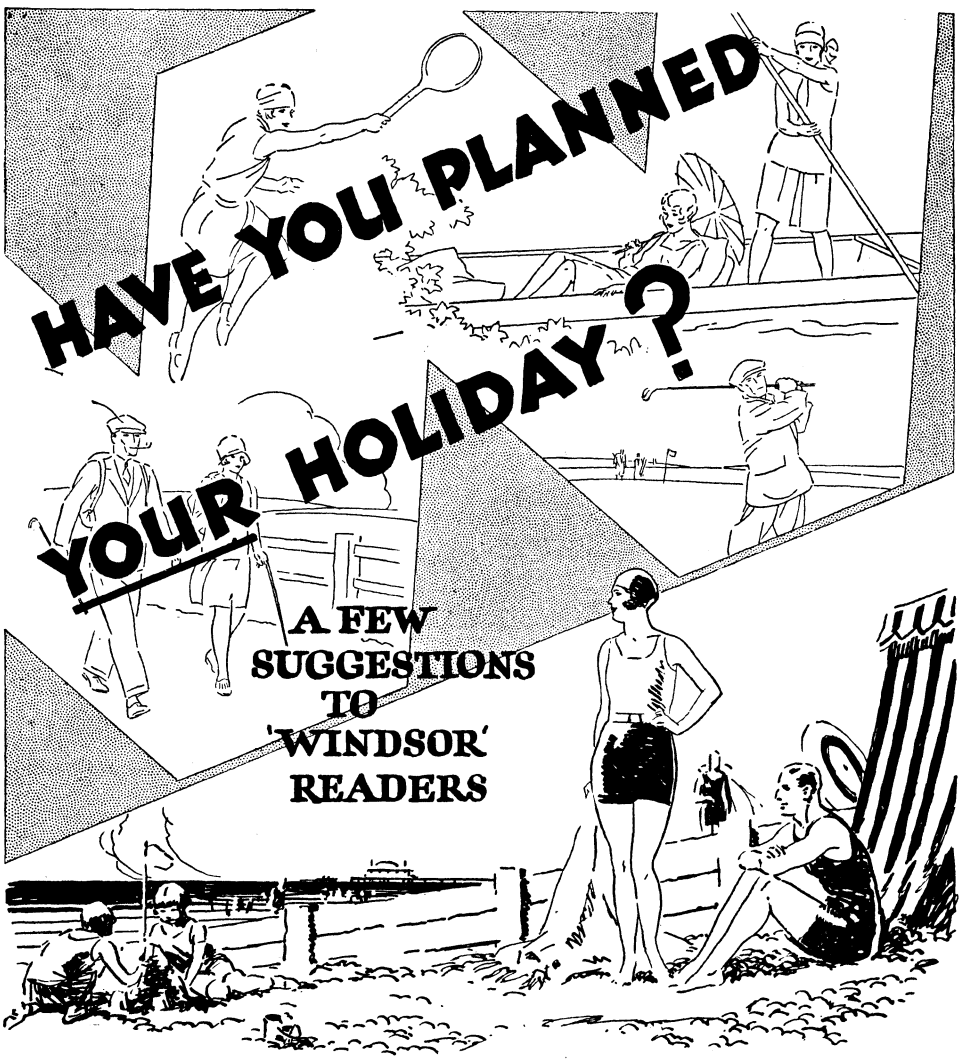
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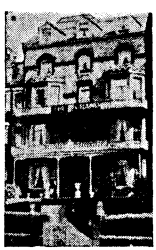
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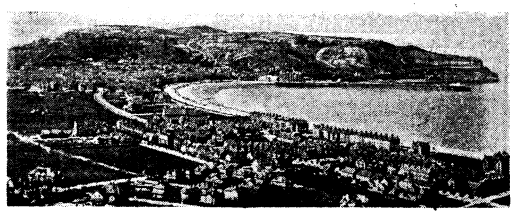
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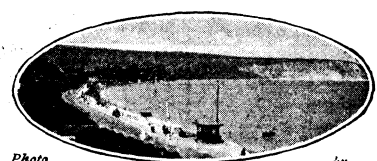


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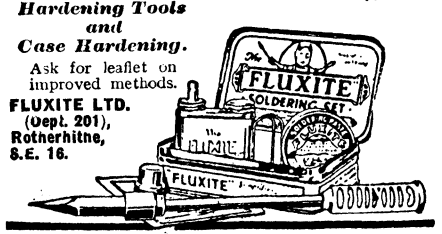
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ALCOHOL

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HAS COME TO RELY ON IT.

In all probability such a man would not have any idea of the hold alcohol had acquired over him until he tried to give it up. That is usually the way. But the awakening would be none the less rude and disquieting; rude, because unexpected; disquieting, because once alcohol ceases to be a slave and becomes a master, he (if we may think of alcohol anthropomorphically) develops into the very worst form of tyrant whom only a revolution can displace. It is the function of the Turvey Treatment to make the revolution; and it does so swiftly, quietly, and with the least possible trouble to everyone concerned.

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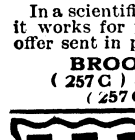


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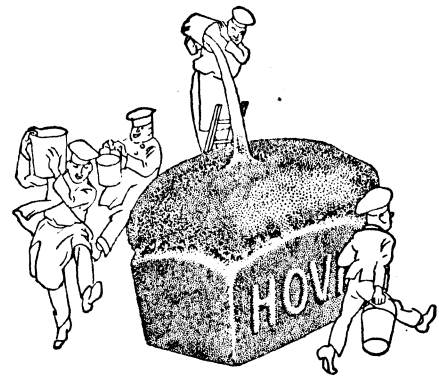
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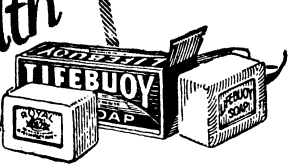
After Romp-time, Bath-time—After Bath-time, Bed

What a merciful provision of Nature that for half of the twenty-four hours their active limbs should lie still! Like puppies, they have been playing and romping the livelong day. But now even *they* feel it's time mummy came and tucked them up.

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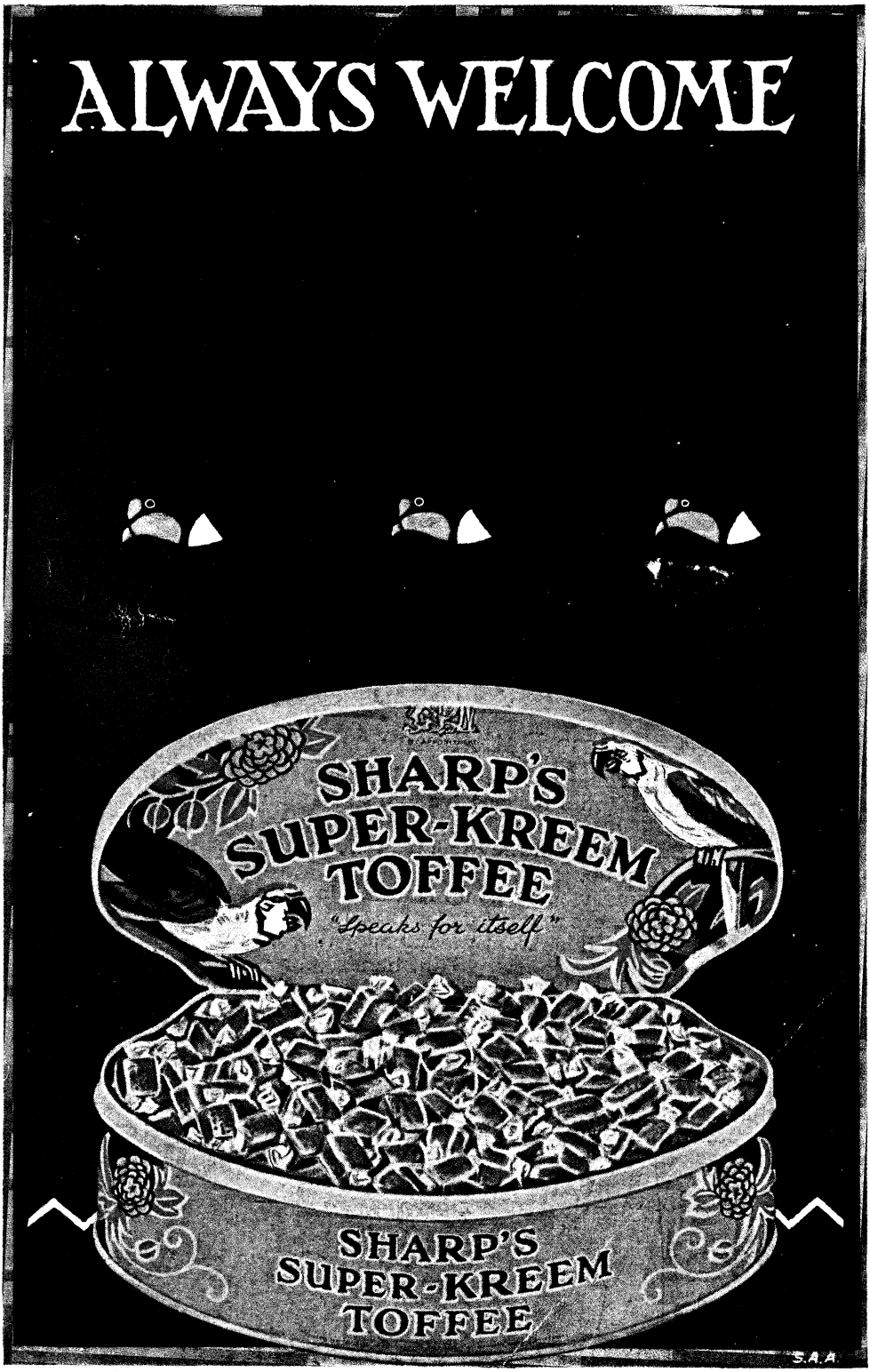
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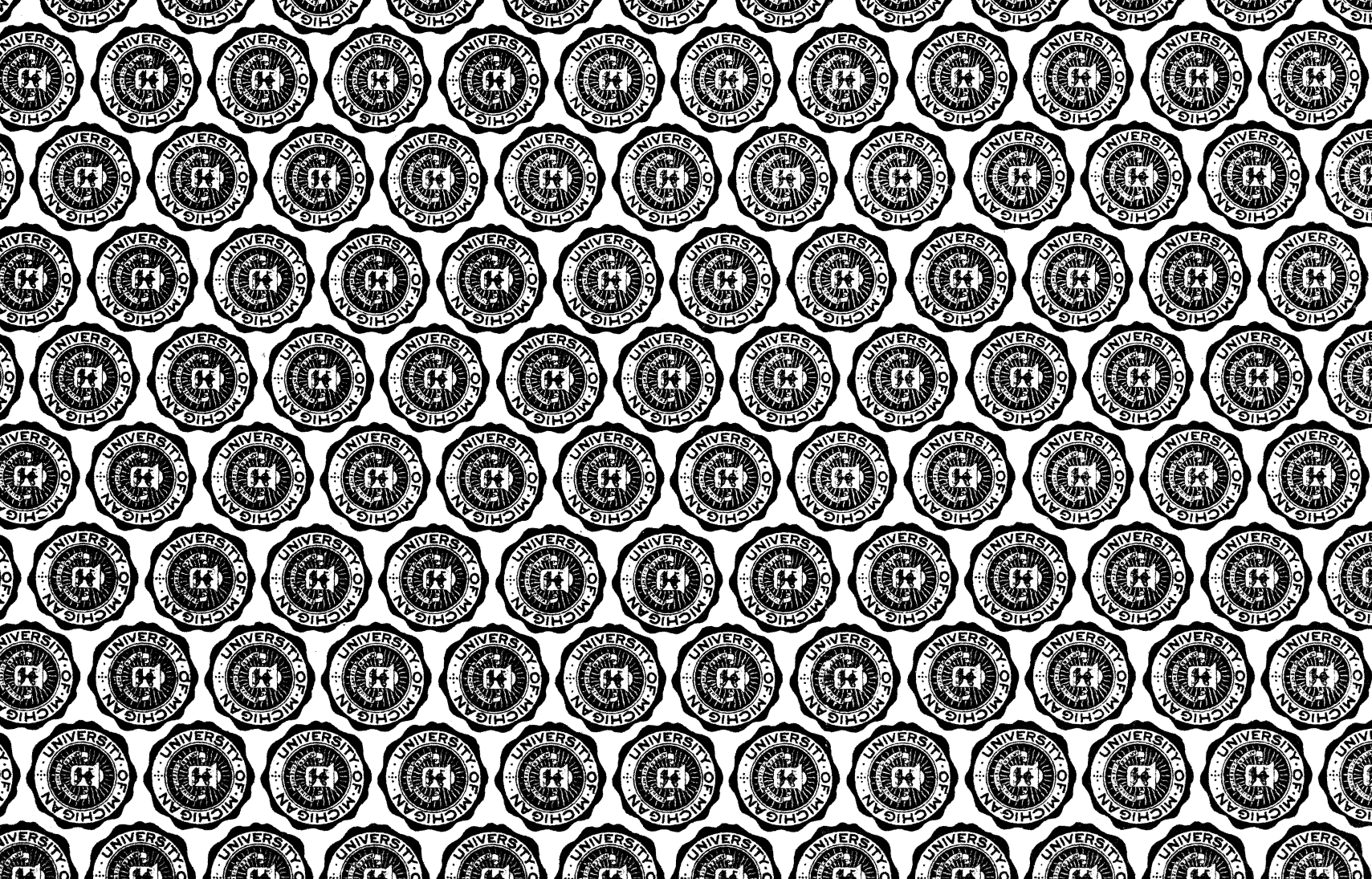


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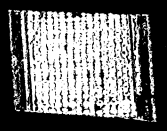
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